

LEGENDS FROM GREECE AND ROME

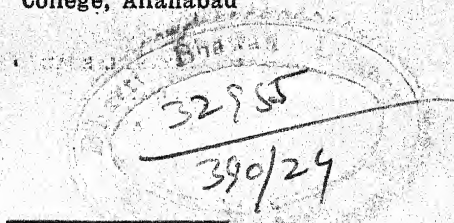
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COLLECTED AND ARRANGED

BY

DANIEL KERRIN, M. A. (ABERDEEN)

Principal, Boy's High School and Intermediate
College, Allahabad



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INTRODUCTION

In the preparation of this book my aim has been to set before young readers in India, a few of the Greek and Roman Legends which have been favourites with the young people of the west for many centuries, and which have, in more ways than one, exercised an influence on literature and the fine arts in many countries.

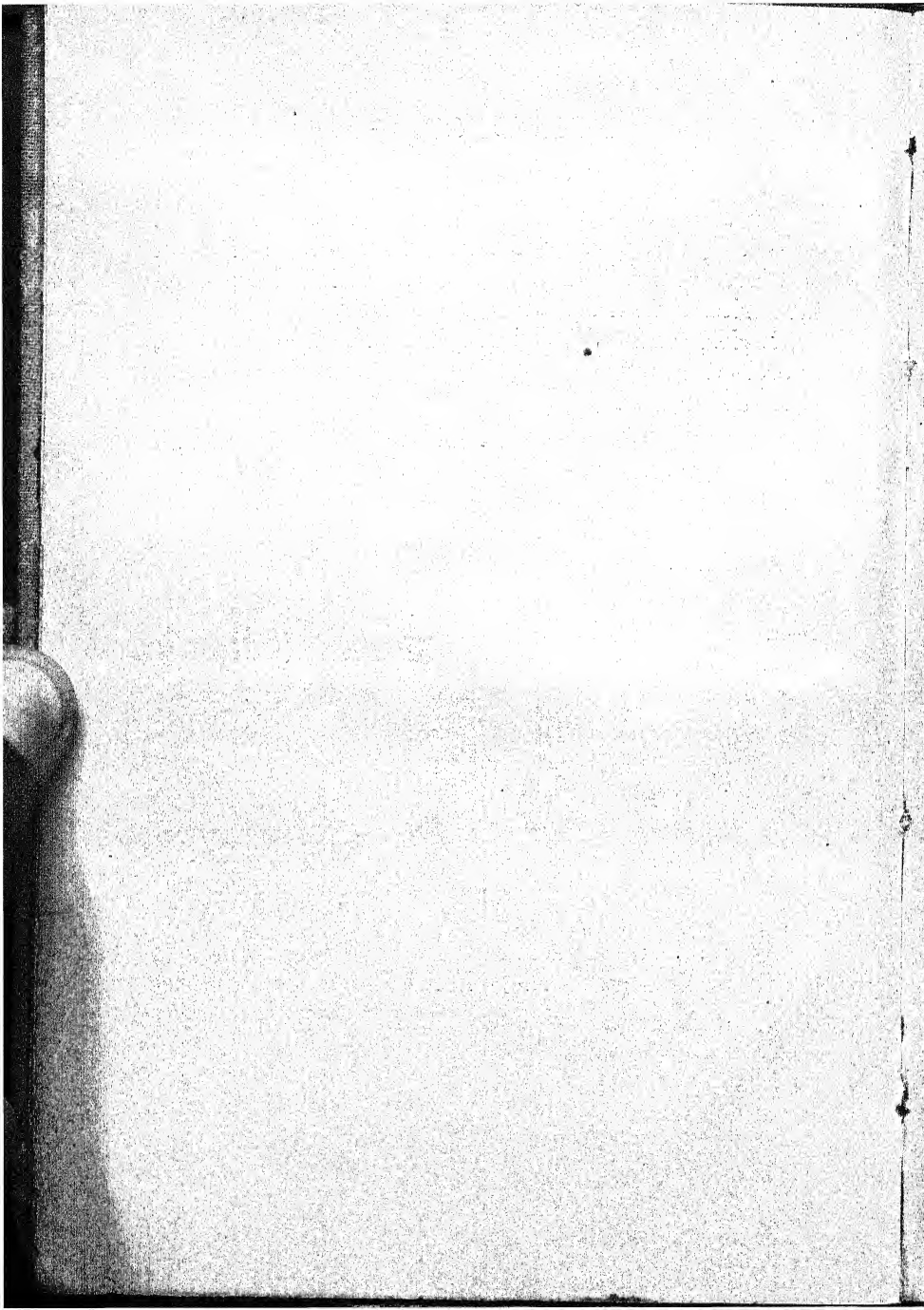
As my readers scan these pages, they will find many myths that are known to them, for as we read the legends of east and west, we find the same stories common to both ; one more fact that goes to prove that we own a common ancestry.

Moreover, I hope that this little book may help many of those who, in the course of their reading, often come across names which possess for them no meaning. Open what writer we may, we seem to chance on allusions to the stories of the gods, and very often the most common words of to-day have their origin in the stories of the gods.

My main aim, however, has been to amuse, and not to instruct and if I have succeeded in this aim, I shall feel more than repaid for the labour that the compilation of these stories has entailed.

Finally I must acknowledge my indebtedness to Nathaniel Hawthorne, Charles Kingsley, Charles Lamb and several other writers from whose works I have largely derived my material.

D. KERRIN.



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LEGENDS FROM GREECE AND ROME

I. PERSEUS AND THE GORGON.

Long ago, in the days when the world was young, lived Danae the beautiful daughter of King Acrisius. She had a little son named Perseus, but when he was still a baby, by order of Acrisius, he and his mother were fastened in a wooden *chest*, and cast adrift on the sea. This was done because Acrisius had been told by a soothsayer that his grandson would slay him, and he hoped by this means to rid himself of the boy and his mother for ever.

On and on floated the chest until, one evening, it was cast up on the island of Seriphos, where it was discovered by a fisherman,—Dictys by name,—who happened to be the brother of the king of the island, King Polydectes.

Now Dictys was a kind and honest man ; and he took Danae and her baby son to live with him, until Perseus had grown up into a strong and handsome youth, very skilful in the use of all weapons.

King Polydectes, on the other hand, was an extremely wicked man, and he determined to get rid of Perseus by sending him on a dangerous mission in which he would probably be killed, so that he might seize Danae and force her to marry him.

This he did in a very cunning way. He sent for Perseus on a certain feast day, on which it was the custom that all the guests should bring him valuable presents. Perseus alone came without anything at all, for he was very poor. On seeing this, the other guests began to mock

him, of whom they had ever been jealous. But Perseus held his peace. When in due course, however, King Polydectes asked "where is the gift of the gods that the son of Jupiter has brought me?", the boy could no longer hold his peace, and in a trumpet-like voice replied boldly "Unlike these lords, wealth I have none, yet will I fetch to thee a greater gift than you have ever received,—the head of Medusa the Gorgon"

This promise of Perseus soon spread through the island and everyone rejoiced, for most of the inhabitants were as wicked as the king, and nothing would have pleased them better than that some harm should befall Perseus. As he walked about the island, all, except the old fisherman, jeered at him saying "Ho, ho! Medusa's snakes will sting him well"!

Now I must tell you that, at this period, there lived three Gorgons, terrible monsters, with the faces of women, but with the bodies of dragons, and with feet and claws of brass. The worst terror of all was, that any person who looked on their faces, was immediately turned into stone. Of these three, by far the most hideous was Medusa, whose head was covered with hissing snakes instead of hair, and who was the terror of the whole world, but yet she alone of the three was mortal and therefore to be slain.

Now Perseus, because of his courage and steadfastness, had many of the inhabitants of heaven as his friends, and, as he prayed to them for help in his dangerous task, they generously came to his assistance

First came Pallas Athéné the goddess of wisdom, who placed in his hands a brightly polished shield, saying, "Do not look at Medusa herself, but at her reflection in this shield. Strike hard and surely, and, when you have severed her head, wrap it in the goatskin which is attached to the shield. Then fear not but that you will return home safely."

With her came Hermes, the messenger of the gods, in his winged sandals, and he, too, had his gifts to offer—his

winged shoes, which enabled their owner to travel with the speed of lightning, and his sword which always dealt death at the first blow

From the daughters of the Evening Star, Perseus obtained the magic helmet of Pluto, king of the underworld, which made the wearer invisible as long as he wore it, and from other immortal beings, he learned which paths to follow on his long and perilous journey.

Day after day, Perseus travelled through the air, sometimes alone, sometimes with Hermes as his companion, until, at length, he reached a land where the gentle light of day had vanished, and there he found himself in a place where clammy fog hid all things, and where the sea was black as pitch. Here, in a cave of horrors, dwelt the three monstrous sisters, all of whom were wrapped in sleep as he made his approach.

In the shield of Pallas Athené, Perseus saw the scene reflected, and, as he looked on it, his heart was heavy, but screwing up his courage, and keeping his gaze firmly fixed on the shield, with one swift blow of his sword he smote Medusa's neck with all his might. To the rocky floor fell her body with a crash of brass, while, with averted eyes, the intrepid youth wrapped up her head in his goatskin, sprang aloft and flew away faster than one of Athené's arrows.

The other two Gorgons now awakened, and, with hideous cries, flew after the slayer of Medusa, but him they could not find since the magic helmet hid him from their sight. Across the seas they flew and over the yellow sands of the Sahara desert, and, as Perseus flew before them, some blood drops fell from the head of Medusa, and from them bred the vipers that are found in the desert to this day.

On, on, flew Perseus, the foul sisters left far behind, until, one day, he saw in the waters beneath him his island home, Seriphus. Here he expected to see his dear mother, but, during his absence, the wicked king had treated her so badly that she had escaped to a temple where some good old priests took her in, and were exceedingly kind to her.

Not finding his mother, as he had expected, Perseus went at once to the king's palace and was immediately taken into the monarch's presence. Polydectes was not at all pleased to see him, for he had hoped and expected that the Gorgons would have torn the gallant youth into pieces. However, the king pretended to be pleased to see Perseus, and asked him if he had succeeded in his mission.

"Have you performed your promise, young man? Have you brought me the snake-entwined head of Medusa? If not, it will cost you dear, for your life shall pay forfeit."

"O King," replied Perseus in a quiet way, "I swore that, with the help of the gods, you should have Medusa's head. The gods have helped me, and, if your Majesty pleases, I suggest that a holiday be proclaimed and that all your Majesty's subjects be summoned to see this marvel."

The king took the young man's advice, and next day all the citizens hastened to the palace to see the Gorgon's head.

At the sight of such a huge assembly, Perseus was filled with pity at the fate in store for them and was extremely unwilling to produce the Gorgon's head. At length, however, in a stern voice, King Polydectes said "Show us Medusa's head, or this instant you die."

"Be it so," sighed Perseus, "Behold the head of Medusa", and, so saying, he held it aloft and removed the goatskin, taking care not to look at it himself. In that instant, wicked King Polydectes, his evil counsellors, and

his base subjects were all changed into lifeless figures of greystone. Perseus then went to tell his mother that she need no longer fear the wicked king and that good Dictys was henceforward to be monarch of the island. Here we must leave our hero.

2. APOLLO AND DAPHNE.

"This tree, doth Daphne cover,
That never pitied lover."

(OLD ENGLISH AIR.)

Phoebus Apollo, the most beautiful and best beloved of all the dwellers in Olympus, had many strongly defined traits of human nature, both good and bad; his faculty of falling in love being especially marked. Conqueror of all the earth, yet not always victorious over the heart of a maid was he, as the following tale of his first love goes to prove.

One day, as mischievous Cupid was playing with his bow and arrows, the young god Apollo jeered at him saying "What have arms to do with thee? Leave such for stronger hands than thine. To such as I, is it given to wield the weapons of war. Be contented with thy torch and kindle fires, if thou canst, but, such light arrows as thy puny arms can hurl forth, will surely be unable to hurt god or man."

Then the son of Venus merrily and saucily replied "Say what thou wilt, great Apollo, yet will I prove that I am able with my shafts to wound to the heart even a warrior like thyself."

So saying, he carefully chose two arrows from his quiver. One, with a sharp golden point, he fitted to his bow, drew back the string till it was set, and then let fly

the arrow which sped straight to the very heart of the handsome warrior god. With the other, tipped with lead, and blunt at its point, he pierced the heart of the beautiful Daphne, daughter of the river god Peneus. This mischievous trick accomplished, the boy-god laughed joyfully, for he knew full well, that he who was struck by the golden arrow, must experience to the full the pangs of love, while the leaden tipped arrow gave to its victim a hatred of love and complete freedom from all the weaknesses that love brings in its train.

As Phoebus was walking by the banks of the river, in the cool of a summer's evening, while the warm west wind stirred the leaves of the trees with its gentle caresses, he chanced to spy fair Daphne. One of Diana's nymphs was she, as cold and chaste as the goddess herself. Overcome by her beauty, a fierce and passionate love seized him, and ardently he sought to woo her. In the day time as he drove the chariots of the sun, he thought of her, at night, he dreamed of her. Yet never did the beautiful nymph look kindly on him. Love to her was as nought. Her every interest was centred in the chase.]

Soon there came a time when Apollo could restrain himself no longer. One day he lay in wait for his enchantress; evening had cast its shadows in the woods; the sun had sunk to rest, and all was calm and still as through the peaceful glades strolled Daphne, tall and lithe and beautiful.

With imploring hands Apollo followed her. Though a god, he had so far lowered himself as to plead for the love of a mere nymph. She heard his steps as he followed her and turned round, angry that she should be followed against her will.

"O stay, fair Daphne," cried he, "No enemy to thee am I; but thy imploring lover. To mortals or to gods

never have I bowed my head, for, to them, I am both conqueror and king. To thee I bow, a conquered suppliant."

Daphne loathed his words of burning love and hastened on. And as his love gave speed to his feet, she heard Phoebus gaining on her, and thought of him, not as a lover, but as a remorseless pursuer, whose touch would be worse than death. Swifter and swifter fled she, while nearer and nearer did Apollo draw, until, at last, just as they reached the banks of the crystal stream of which her father Peneus was guardian-spirit, he seized her in his passionate grasp.

"Father! father!" cried she "Save me from him whose love I fear and loathe"

At these words, even as Apollo was encircling her with his arms, Daphne, the beauteous river maid, was Daphne no longer. Her lovely face, her golden hair, her soft white limbs all were transformed as Phoebus seized his prize. Her feet were rooted into the marshy ground, her limbs became woody branches and verdant foliage, her features dissolved, and the once beauteous form was merged in the heart of a noble tree.

Apollo stood amazed at seeing Daphne transformed as she had desired. "Accurs'd am I above gods and men", wailed he, "Farewell, fair Daphne, most false and unkind of maidens, my love lies buried with thee. Yet though thou canst not be my bride, still, for thy sake, shall the laurel be sacred to me for ever, and its leaves shall never fade, but shall form a victor's crown wherever men hold me honour."

So, still we speak of "gaining laurels," and still does the early love of Apollo crown those, who have distinguished themselves in arts or war

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3. ARION AND THE DOLPHIN

One of the most renowned of all the famous singers of ancient Greece was Arion who spent his life under the patronage of Periander, king of Corinth.

It so befell that a great musical contest was to be held in Sicily, and when Arion heard of this, he sailed away to take part in it, not so much for the valuable prizes he might gain, as for the glory and renown that success would bring to him.

As he swayed the emotions of the assembled throng with his sweet songs, and the magical touch of his fingers on his lyre, the King of Sicily and the judges were so charmed that they awarded him all the prizes - much gold and many precious jewels. In order to bring his trophies safely home, he hired a Corinthian Ship, and started on his homeward voyage with sweet words of praise ringing in his ears.

Never had the sun shone more brightly nor had the sea been calmer than it was that day. Little did Arion guess that he would have been safer on the most stormy sea than he was with his treacherous crew.

Fainter and fainter grew Sicily on the horizon, till only her lofty mountain peaks showed dimly against the azure of the heavens. Gentle winds and glorious weather were bearing the noble poet homewards, when, all at once, the wicked crew fell upon their passenger in order to seize his wealth.

"Take my jewels and gold, but spare my life" implored he. But all in vain.

"How then should we dare to face the king thy master?" was the jeering reply. Thy wealth we will most assuredly fetch in safety to Corinth, but thou, the owner, might betray us. Choose either to slay thyself, or to be cast to the terrors of the deep.

"Fear of death have I none," replied the intrepid bard, "but one favour I crave of thee. Let me but sing my last farewell to my harp."

"We grant thee this", answered the captain, "but once thou hast ended, thou must surely die", and with these words the crew withdrew to the further end of the vessel, and stood ready to hear the music of the renowned poet who had gained the wealth they now hoped to make their own.

So Arion arrayed himself in his court dress, and crowned himself with a laurel wreath, which he considered the most noble of all his trophies and, thus arrayed, he began his funeral chant.

We are told that when he sang on shore, the lion and lamb would lie down together to listen, yea the hare and the hunter, while overhead the lark and eagle remained still and silent in the air to listen. Now his golden harp resounded so sweetly o'er the waters that not only were these cruel men almost moved to pity, but a school of dolphins gathered round the ship, attracted as by some hidden spell. When the song was over, Arion, harp in hand, leapt overboard.

The sailors, in the gayest of spirits, glad to be rid of him, carried on their course towards Greece. But, alas for them ! Arion was not drowned, nor had he sunk for ever beneath the waves. One of the dolphins, which had heard his music, caught him on its back and swam on with him to Corinth, where he arrived the day before the ship.

He was eagerly welcomed by the king, who could, however, scarcely believe his strange story of escape from drowning. When the ship sailed boldly into harbour, the crew were summoned before the great monarch and asked for news of the bard.

"He is well and happy," declared they, "but he has made up his mind that he will remain in Sicily, where he is honoured and venerated."

But as the lie sprang to their lips, from behind a tapestry, arrayed as he was when last they had seen him, Arion, himself, appeared before their gaze with his magic harp in his hand.

No longer did the terrified sailors dare to deny their crime, but fell prostrate on the ground praying for mercy and pardon from him whom they had wronged. But the irate king was stern and just and meted out to the treacherous crew a death more cruel than the one to which they had doomed Arion. The poet himself became the greatest hero in all Greece and was honoured through all the ages.

4. TITHONUS.

"The gods themselves cannot recall their gifts."

(TENNYSON).

Day after day, when Phoebus Apollo drove his wondrous team of horses and his blazing chariot of fire across the sky, it was Aurora, the goddess of the dawn, who opened the pearly gates of Olympus and rolled back the black curtains of night. She was so beautiful that all the sky blushed under her gentle caress when she appeared in the East.

Far below on earth, on the plains of Troy, lived a mortal youth, Tithonus by name, who loved Aurora so passionately that never did he fail to leave his bed, while it was still dark, to watch for her daily arrival. He was a tall and comely youth, and Aurora loved him in return and wished to make him her spouse.

At length she approached the Father of the gods, Jupiter, imploring him that to Tithonus might be granted a draught of nectar, that drink of the gods, the chief property of which was that he who quaffed it should become immortal. Jupiter granted this boon, and Aurora took Tithonus to dwell in her abode on Mount Olympus.

But the goddess had forgotten when she asked for nectar to ask at the same time that to Tithonus, along with immortality, might be granted the gift of perpetual youth. And so it came to pass that the time came when grey hairs were seen mingling with his golden curls. Still Aurora continued to love him, to heap gifts on him, and to feed him on ambrosia the food of the gods. Yet Tithonus grew still older and older, and after several centuries, he was so very old that he had lost all power of movement. Little but his voice was left and even that had become shrill and thin.

Then to Aurora with imploring voice he turned and said

“ Yet hold me not for ever in thine East :
How can my nature longer mix with thine ?
Coldly thy rosy shadows bathe me, cold
Are all thy lights, O cold my wrinkled feet
Upon thy glimmering thresholds, when the steam,
Floats up from those dim fields about the homes
Of happy men that have the power to die,
And grassy barrows of the happier dead ;
Release me, and restore me to the ground.”

Aurora, tired by now of this ancient being, no longer lovable, or capable of loving, went to the Council Chamber of Jupiter and entreated him to take away from Tithonus the fatal gift.

“ No, daughter, no ”, replied the father of gods and men.
“ The gods themselves cannot recall their gifts. At thy

request, to Tithonus gave we the gift of immortality and immortal must he remain."

Then, touched with compassion for the grief of fair Aurora, and with pity for the sufferings of Tithonus, he added.

"Immortal must he remain, but we can change his shape." So he transformed the wretched old man into a little insect and sent him again to the earth, where men named him the grasshopper.

And those of us, who rise early enough in the morning, may often see Tithonus with his face turned to the east, and with his voice greeting the arrival of his beloved.

5. CEYX AND HALCYONE.

Long, long ago, there reigned in Thessaly a king, by name Ceyx, son of Hesperus, the Morning Star, and as fair and graceful as his noble father. To him was wedded Halcyone, daughter of the rugged old Aeolus, king of the winds.

Now it happened that Ceyx had, perforce, to make a journey to the Oracle of Apollo at Delphi to find in what way his country had offended that deity. A long and stormy journey it was, over dangerous seas and unknown lands.

While he was away, a very heavy storm arose, and loud and angrily blew the winds. A helpless plaything on the mighty ocean was the king of Thessaly. Long ere the shores of his native land had been blotted out of sight by the black curtain of night, the frail vessel, in which he was sailing, was buffeted about by the enormous waves, eager for their prey. Its sails were torn to ribbons, its masts were shattered, and on such a seething whirlpool the oars were of no avail, so that, all the terrified sailors could do,

was to wait patiently for the doom that could not long be deferred. One by one, they were swept overboard to be sucked down to the depths of ocean, while the howling winds drove on the tiny craft with shrieks of mocking laughter.

While he remained alive, Ceyx thought only of his beloved wife. For death he had no fear, only sorrow for the grief that his loss must bring to Halcyone. For himself, he asked but one favour from the god of the sea, — that his body might be borne where Halcyone could give it pious burial. And as he breathed this prayer, with triumphant shouts, the cruel waves seized him in their maw, and Ceyx was no more.

The faithful, lovely Halcyone, where was she? Alone, white-faced and tired of eye, she had paced the shore all night, straining her glance seaward, now in hope, now in fear. Eagerly she gazed at the spot where she had last seen the vanishing sail of her husband's ship. Alone she was, with not a soul to cheer her, not a soul to comfort her.

Yet hope had not altogether faded from her breast. Was it not possible that Ceyx had weathered the storm? Might he not have found shelter in some secluded haven, and even now be returning to her? But the shore was scattered with wreckage, and she waited on, fearful, yet still hoping that her beloved husband might be safe, praying, ever praying with most piteous voice for his return.

The misery of her agony was too much, even for Juno, queen of heaven, who from her throne on high, had seen the fate that had met Ceyx. She sent her servant Iris to the caves of Somnus, god of sleep, bidding him to tell Halcyone in a vision that all her vigil was in vain.

Tired out in soul, in body and in mind, lay Halcyone longing for the gift of sleep. Then came Somnus in the

form of Ceyx, not the glorious handsome Ceyx, of old, but another being altogether. Dank and wet was he, entwined in his hair was seaweed, his face was pale, and his body gashed and bruised in many places.

"O loved Halcyone," said he, "no longer are thy prayers of any use to me. A corpse am I, tossed here and there, on the face of the merciless ocean, yet longing, ever longing for rest and comfort on thy dear breast."

With a piteous cry Halcyone started up, but no sign was there of her loved one, no trace of his presence. In the cold grey dawn of morning, once again the sorrowful queen sought the sea-shore. Nought could she see. Yet, stay what did she see in the far distance? To her came the bitter knowledge that it was a lifeless body swept on, and ever on, by the tossing waves. Nearer and nearer it came, until, with broken heart, she uttered the words "O Ceyx, my beloved spouse, is this the manner in which thou returnest to me?"

And now, the body was still out of her reach, and, as if to mock her eager endeavours, the cruel waves began to carry it further away than ever. She strove to reach him, and then, wonder of wonders, from out her shoulders grew wings and with them she skimmed the waves until in the form of a bird with radiant plumage, with a loud cry, she reached her Ceyx. And she touched his marble lips, in his turn the dead king became a living bird the image of Halcyone herself.

So after all the gods were not merciless, and Ceyx and Halcyone were not separated. They could still be happy, in the shape of kingfishers. After this, every year, the two birds built a nest which floated on the sea. To them did the gods grant a boon; that for seven days before the middle of winter, and for seven days after, a great calm should reign over the sea, with never a breath of wind

blowing, while Halcyone should hatch her young. To these days the name of *Halcyon days* was given, and, from that time to this, days of fine weather and calm seas in mid-winter have been called by sailors "*Halcyon Days*."

6. THE ARGONAUTS.

I. THE LAYING OF THE PLAN.

In Iolchos, long ago, reigned King Aeson, who had a little son, Jason. When the boy was quite small, he was sent away from home and taken by his nurse to the cave of Chiron.

Chiron was a centaur. He had the body and legs of horse, with the head and shoulders of a man, and, in spite of his curious appearance, he was a very clever man and an expert teacher. He had many famous pupils. Hercules, the strongest of all men was one, so was Achilles, the great Grecian hero, and then too, there was Aesculapius, who afterwards attained fame in the realm of medicine.

Chiron's school was a rough, wild place, unlike the schools to which we are accustomed. Instead of reading and writing, his pupils were taught how to play the harp, how to cure disease, to use well and skilfully the weapons of war, and such like arts. Rough no doubt, the education was, but it made strong, brave men.

Day by day, Jason grew, and when about twenty years old, he was a tall handsome youth. His hair fell down his massive shoulders in golden curls, and his whole appearance was that of a young demi-god. At length, he determined to go into the world to seek his fortune. He had heard of the cruelty of a certain Pelias who had driven old Aeson from the throne, and shut him up in prison, and now that he was grown to man's estate, Jason resolved to set this business right, and to punish the wicked Pelias,

to cast him down from the throne and set himself there instead.

So, bidding good-bye to his old master and his friends, he threw a leopard's skin on his shoulders and set out on his travels. On his feet was a pair of handsomely embroidered sandals.

On his way down from the mountain cave, he came to a swollen river, hurrying down to the plains and roaring angrily as it went. It was quite certainly too deep for him to wade, too rough for him to swim, and bridge there was none. What was he to do in such predicament?

As he stood wondering how he would get across, he heard a voice saying. "Where are you going, Jason?"

He looked around, and saw an old woman leaning on a staff. She looked very aged and infirm, but she had a pair of large and beautiful eyes which seemed to pierce him through and through.

"I am on my way to Iolchos," replied the young man, "to force the wicked king Pelias to surrender my father's throne, and make myself king."

"Then help me over the river, will you? For I, too, have business on the further side."

"My good woman," replied Jason, "as you see, the stream is very swollen, and if, perchance, I were to stumble, it would sweep us away. Fain would I help you, but I doubt whether I am strong enough to carry you over, but still I will try."

Without more ado, he lifted the seemingly helpless old woman on to his back and with her arms around his neck he boldly set out into the river. Every moment he expected that he and his helpless companion would be swept into the torrent and carried away for ever. All the time the old woman moaned and abused him for wetting her

clothes. At length, he reached the farther bank and scrambled to shore all dripping and wet. He made to lay his burden on the bank, when she sprang from his back and appeared before him in a very different shape. For, instead of the bent and withered hag, there stood before him, a tall majestic figure like no mortal, her ragged garments transformed to queenlike robes, and her eyes smiling on him kindly.

"Yes indeed," said she, as if divining his thoughts "It is indeed Juno, queen of heaven, to whom you have done such a service. In your own hour of need call upon me, and your prayer will not be in vain," and, so saying, she vanished from his sight.

Amazed, yet happy, Jason took his way on towards a city, the towers of which he could see in the distance. To his dismay, he found he had lost one of his golden sandals in the river-bed, and had, perforce, to continue his journey with only one sandal.

In due course he arrived at the gates of Iolcos, where a festival was being held in honour of the gods.

Through the crowded streets he trudged unnoticed, until, at length, one man cried to his neighbours. "Look at him! just look at him!—Do you see that he has only one sandal." "Here is the man with only one sandal." At this, all eyes were turned on him, and he was followed with many whispers till he came unto the presence of Pelias the King. "And now you must know that, years before, a wise old prophet had foretold to the king that, one day, a man with one sandal, would cast him down from his throne."

Dismayed was the king, at this fulfilment of the prophecy, but, hiding his fear, he demanded who the stranger was.

"I am Jason, son of Aeson, come to claim my throne," was the fearless reply.

At this, the king stood aghast, but hiding still more his fear, he pretended to welcome his nephew and bade him sit down at the feast, saying that on the morrow they would discuss the matter of the kingdom.

Joyfully did Jason do so, for, simple and honourable himself, he thought all men the same. He sat, and ate, and drank with them in a friendly manner. When the feast was over, the minstrels came in to amuse the guests. A song that brought the blood to our hero's brow was the story of the Golden Fleece: how Phrixus and Helle, a king's son and daughter, were persecuted by their cruel mother Ino: how they fled from her on the back of a golden ram, sent by a kindly god; how poor Helle, losing her balance as they flew through the air, fell into the sea, at a spot, ever since called after her,—*Hellespont*,—but Phrixus reached in safety the far lands of Colchis; how he made a sacrifice of the ram to Jupiter, in grateful thanks for his safety, and hung its fleece in the sacred grove of the people of Colchis, among whom he spent the rest of his days. There it was guarded, night and day, by a sleepless serpent, and then the minstrel told how no hero had ever dared to seek it, so great were the dangers to be overcome, but that the shade of the dead Phrixus could never rest in peace, till the Golden Fleece came back once more to Greece. And as this lay was sung, crafty Pelias watched the flashing eyes of his nephew and said.

"Where is the man who will dare to bring back to us that Golden Fleece, and give our father peace?"

Falling into the trap, Jason jumped to his feet and cried "I will seek the Fleece, if I have to pay for it with my life."

Next day, he saw how he had been tricked and began to suspect that his uncle had plotted to get rid of him in

this manner. But one of the lessons he had learned from Chiron was that a true man never draws back from his word, and he set himself to the work of carrying out his promise.

First, he hastened to the Oracle of Juno at Dodona, to ask the Talking Oak there the best plan to pursue. Standing beneath the marvellous tree, Jason looked up into its green foliage and spoke aloud, as if to a human being.

“What shall I do to win the Golden Fleece?”

Then with the tone of a mighty wind, rustling among the branches, the tree said clearly and distinctly.

“Go to Argus the shipbuilder and bid him build a galley of fifty oars.”

Back to Iolchos went Jason and sought the famous shipbuilder, taking with him a branch of the oak to make a figure-head for the ship. The cunning builder made a ship so strong that it could bear the buffeting of the winds and waves, and yet so light that it could be carried by the crew; and on its bows was fixed the branch from the oak tree carved into the semblance of a woman's head.

Now came the task of choosing a crew for the vessel which was named “Argo,” after its designer. No hard task was it for all the heroes of Greece had been among Jason's comrades in the cave of old Chiron. Fifty of these were chosen, among them, names of fame, Hercules, Castor and Pollux, Peleus and Theseus, Lynaus and Orpheus, and many more, one to each seat of the galley. Tiphys was their steersman, Jason their leader.

The first difficulty arose, when the Argonauts, as these brave adventurers were called, had completed their preparations for the voyage. The vessel was so long and heavy that not the combined strength of the fifty heroes could launch her into the sea.

Despondently they sat down, until, at length, Jason bethought himself of the marvellous figure head.

Springing to his feet "O daughter of the Talking Oak," cried he, "how shall we launch our ship?"

"Seat yourselves," replied the image, "handle your oars and let Orpheus play upon his harp."

Immediately the heroes went on board, while Orpheus swept his fingers over his instrument. At once they felt the vessel stir, and, as he continued his melody, the galley slid at once into the sea; the rowers plied their oars, the white foam surged around and triumphantly did the Argo sail out of harbour followed by the good wishes of all, save the wicked old Pelias, who hoped from the bottom of his craven heart that they might never return.

II. THE VOYAGE TO COLCHIS.

It would be hard and long to tell of all the obstacles that beset that noble band on their long journey, and how one after another was separated from his comrades by grievous misfortune, never alas to reach the goal of the voyage.

At a certain island, on their way, they were kindly received by King Cyzicus, its genial sovereign, who feasted them and treated them like brothers. But the Argonauts saw that this good king looked downcast and sad, and they, therefore, enquired of him the cause of his sorrow. The king informed them that he and his subjects were being cruelly treated by the inhabitants of a hilly region near by, who had killed many of the citizens and laid waste their country. And even while they were talking about it, these savages came down from their hilly retreat and began to block up the harbour, until brave Hercules gave the alarm and alone kept off the band, until his friends had returned to defend their ship.

Soon cruel fate was to rob them of bold Hercules, who, many a time, had served them well. As he tugged at his oar in the stormy seas, it broke and there was not another on board fit for his brawny arm. When next they were ashore, Hercules wandered off into the forest to cut himself another oar from some huge tree. With him went Hylas, the beautiful youth so dear to him, and another, member of the crew named Polyphemus. While Hercules was hewing down the tree he had chosen, young Hylas lay and rested by a neighbouring fountain. It so chanced that this fountain was the home of a bevy of water nymphs who were so taken by the lad's beauty that they cast their arms around him and dragged him into the water, never again to be seen by mortal eye. Polyphemus heard his last cry and ran to tell Hercules that his darling was being caught by wild beasts or by robbers. In vain they searched far and near, but never a trace of the lad could they find. Meantime their shipmates waited impatiently for them, for the wind had turned favourable. Hour after hour they waited, until, at last, in despair they sadly set sail, wondering about the fate of their comrades.

Skirting the coasts of the Black Sea they met with other losses and delays. At the mouth of the river Archeron, where all had gone ashore for amusement and rest, the prophet Idmon, blind to his own fate, was slain by a wild boar. Tiphys too, that intrepid steersman, died of a fever and many days were spent in his funeral ceremonies and many other losses and sorrows were there. At length, they drew near their goal and now they met with new companions. For, on a tiny island, they found four gallant youths of princely demeanour and very handsome. These proved to be the sons of that Phrixus who had brought the Golden Fleece to Colchis.

These agreed, though not without secret fears, for well they knew the cruel king Aetes, to guide the gallant band

to Colchis and the Golden Fleece. And so, at last, the Argo entered the River Phasis on which stood Colchis, and near its banks, the heroes saw the dark and gloomy grove, sacred to Mars, in which glittered the Golden Fleece they had come so far to find.

III. THE CAPTURE OF THE GOLDEN FLEECE.

As the ship glided to the harbour walls, there came to meet Jason, King Aetes, for from his citadel he had seen the Argo approach, and an evil dream had warned him of its errand. With him was his son, young Absyrtus, and his two daughters, Medea the dark witch maiden, and fair Calciopé, widow of Phrixus, who rejoiced to see her lost sons again. While the king was exchanging greetings with the heroes, Medea looked with kindly eyes on Jason, for, never before, in all her days, had she seen so handsome and winning a youth.

The wicked king had no joyful feeling at the coming of these strangers, for he knew their errand, but dissembling his ill and uneasy feelings, he led them into his palace and set food before them. Not until his guests had eaten, did he ask what had brought them to his country.

To him did Jason tell of their long voyage and all the dangers they had endured for the sake of the Golden Fleece, which now he demanded as their reward. The king frowned, as he angrily made reply.

"It is indeed a bootless duty, that hath brought thee here ; what thou hast so far suffered and endured is mere child's play to that which the man must dare, who would gain such a prize."

"Listen, rash youth, to the test appointed for that bold claimant who may, in no wise, touch sacred things until he has proved himself more than mere man. First, must he tame my fiery bulls and yoke them to a plough. With

them must he plough the stony field of Mars, and sow the furrow with the teeth of a dragon. From these teeth will spring a horde of armed warriors whom he must slay ere they can slay him. All this must he do between the time when Apollo drives forth his fiery chariot and brings it home again. Then, if he still do dare, may he strive with the serpent that guards the Fleece both day and night. Art thou a man of such metal ?”

Jason's heart quailed as he listened to the terrors he must endure, and the task, indeed, seemed more than mere mortal could accomplish. But outwardly he remained calm and serene, and let the king know that he was ready for the ordeal, be it what it might. Since it would take the whole day, the trial was put off till next day, and back he went to his ship to rest for the ordeal before him.

But, while he slept, Medea, who at first sight had loved Jason, and was minded to save him, if she could, from the fate designed by her pitiless father, was wandering through the gloomy woods around the city, gathering herbs and roots from which to prepare a magic ointment, that, for one day, could keep a man free from all harm of fire and sword, and enable his weapons to meet the fiercest blow. Then, when she was ready, shrouded by a veil, she went to the harbour and called Jason to her side.

“ Wilt thou rashly tempt death ? ” whispered she.

“ Maiden, I had not come to Colchis did I fear death,” replied Jason.

“ But courage alone will avail thee nought. Thou hast but one friend in all this land, Medea the king's daughter. Now list to me ; ” and hastily she instructed him how, by her aid, he might pass through the ordeal unharmed. When she had told him all he must do, Medea put into his hands the magic salve and fled back to the palace, fearful, lest she should be seen.

No time did Jason lose in trusting the stranger maiden. He then anointed himself, from head to foot, with the ointment and did the same to all his weapons and armour. Then boldly, at sunrise, he presented himself before the king.

"What !! still here !" was the sneering taunt of Aetes. I had thought that ere now thou, and thy cringing crew, would have stolen away far from Colchis. But, be it as thou wilt, dearly shalt thou pay for thy presumption."

"The sun is in the sky, and I am ready," was the only reply of Jason.

Without further ado, the king led him to the scene of his trial, where all was ready. On the signal being given, the fiery bulls, released from their stalls, bounded on Jason, breathing red flames from their mouths and roaring like thunder. But dauntless stood the hero and flinched not at their onset. He held up his shield so that they dashed their horns on it in vain, and then he caught one bull by the horns, and, by his magically given strength, turned it on its back so that it lay exhausted and quietened. Then turning to the other bull, he flung it to its knees and conquered it. And now he forced the yoke on their necks, harnessed them to the mighty plough, and ploughed the field with long straight furrows.

This done, he took a helmet, full of dragon's teeth, given him by Aetes, and commenced to sow that strange seed. Strange, indeed, it was, for, no sooner had the earth covered it, than the whole field began to stir and up from the ground sprang a mighty host of armed warriors.

And now he made full use of Medea's secret advice ; for, instead of facing the warriors, with a mighty throw he cast into their midst the helmet which had contained the seeds. Then one mighty warrior turned to the next, accusing him of having struck him. They all fell blindly

on one another, plying spear and sword against each other. So, while Jason leaned on his spear, the fight went on until the field was strewn with corpses. And, as the last rays of the sun sank down below the western horizon, the last of the warriors lay dead on the battlefield.

Then strode Jason boldly to Aetes and demanded the Golden Fleece. But black were the brows of the king as he replied. "We will speak more of that to-morrow. Meantime to rest, for the day has been a hard one."

While the heroes sat at supper, rejoicing at the success of their leader, and wondering what the morrow had in store for him and them, in stole Medea to warn them what was afoot. Her father, so she said, was secretly assembling his warriors, meaning to slay them next day. If the Fleece was to be won by them, it must be then or never.

She said that without her aid, they could do nothing, but she was willing to guide Jason to the grove where it hung, and, by her spells, charm the guardian serpent to sleep so that he could seize the fleece and flee. But one condition did she make. No longer would she dare to remain in Colchis to face the anger of her cruel parent. She must accompany them to Greece and, with her, her brother Absyrtus.

Not long did Jason take to decide. He willingly agreed to the condition she imposed, and, having left his comrades to make ready the Argo for flight, with unhesitating step he followed Medea.

In the silence of the night, they entered the gloomy grove of Mars, where the terrifying hiss of the serpent at once met their ear. Though they trod lightly as they came near the wondrous Fleece, the dragon heard their approach, and, swift as lightning, his black head and forked tongue came hissing among the trees again, darting full forty feet at a stretch. As it approached, Medea tossed

a magic draught down the monster's wide open throat. Immediately the serpent stretched out its massive coils and lay still and motionless. When the hissing had ceased, Jason stepped warily over the monster, laid his hands on the precious Golden Fleece and tore it down.

Away the pair hurried through the grove, the deep shadows of which were illuminated, as they passed, by the glory of the precious object that they bore, and, with the first beams of dawn, they came to the Argo where the crew sitting ready at their oars, hailed the arrival of the Golden Fleece with a shout of joy. Medea and her brother were led on board, and the trophy was nailed to the mast, and then away went the Argo, like a steed let loose, bound for her home in distant Greece. After many adventures, the brave Argonauts again reached Iolcos, where Jason was at once made king with the beautiful young Medea as his queen, a fitting reward to the brave hero who had gained such world-wide glory in the wonderful quest of the Golden Fleece.

7. ORPHEUS AND EURYDICE.

Among the ancients, by far the most famous of all the heroes of music, was the poet Orpheus, a dweller in the land of Thrace. Apollo himself was his father, while his mother was Calliope, the muse of epic poetry.

He had a lyre of his own and learned to play on it when a mere boy. Never before had music, such as his, been even dreamt of, and his playing on the lyre to the accompaniment of his own voice seemed to draw all nature near to him to listen. The birds ceased their songs when he made music and the proudest monarchs of the forest bowed their heads that they might not miss one note that his fingers drew from his magical instrument. When he played, it seemed as though the very stones and rocks gained

hearts. Nay the very universe itself paid heed to him as he sang and played some divine melody.

The nymphs that lived in Thrace soon made friends with him and when he had grown to full manhood, one of them, whose name was Eurydice, became his bride. Orpheus loved her very dearly and scarce could bear that she should be out of his sight, for he feared that some harm might befall her when he was not near to charm all evil away by the magic of his music.

One day, as Eurydice was gathering flowers in the woods, a sad thing befell her. As she was weaving a garland for her hair she stretched out her hand to pluck a flower: but, alas, in doing so, she was bitten by a serpent, hidden in the grass, and soon its poison caused her death.

Then Eurydice had to go to the dark underworld of which Pluto was king and Proserpine queen, far from her loved Orpheus.

When he came back and was told the sad news, he was bowed down with grief, and, feeling that no longer could he live without her, he determined to follow her to the gloomy land of the shades.

This was a fearful journey to make, full of dangers and terrible sights, but the love of Orpheus was too perfect to know any fear, and bravely he set out, his only companion his lyre from which he drew strains such as had never been heard before. They told of perfect love, of unending longing, of pain too great to end with death. They sang of the beauties of the earth, of the sorrow of the world, of things past, and of things to come. And, in so doing, they brought comfort and relief to weary souls, destined to endure for ever, the terrors of the abode of Pluto.

When at last the sorrowful musician came into the presence of Pluto and begged to be permitted to take his

beloved Eurydice back again to the light of day, his request was granted as a special favour but, on one condition, and that condition was, that Orpheus must have faith to believe that Eurydice was following him and until he reached the upper air again, must not turn back to see

Eagerly he agreed, and, with a heart almost breaking with gladness, he heard the call for Eurydice and turned to retrace his steps, with the steps of his wife making joyful music for him behind. Too good it seemed, almost unbelievable in its happiness. She was there, close behind him, and they might hope to spend many more days of happiness together far from that land of darkness.

And then a hideous doubt assailed him. What if Pluto had tricked him? What if there followed him, not Eurydice, but a phantom? He turned his head and by the dim light which was beginning to break over his path saw Eurydice fading away and sinking down again into the realms of Dis. "Farewell!" cried she, "farewell," and her voice was a sigh of hopeless grief. Her arms were stretched out towards him, but she could not follow him any further. He had broken the condition imposed by Pluto, hence Eurydice must go back to the shades

Oh! if only he had not looked back! Eurydice was now lost indeed. Orpheus knew that never again would he be able to bring her back to the upper world. In the depths of his sorrow, he went to live on a lonely mountain where, day and night, he lamented the loss of his fair wife.

The music, that now came from his lyre, was so sad and mournful, that it would have broken anybody's heart to hear it. It was the music of a broken-hearted man. He vowed in his sorrow that never again would he look on the face of a maiden.

This so enraged the women of Thrace, that, in a frenzy of cruelty, they threw themselves on Orpheus and

did him to death. From limb to limb they tore him, and cast his bloodstained lyre into the river that sped its way to the plains, and still as the water bore it on, could be heard the last words of the poet, "Eurydice ! Eurydice ! "

To the place of his death came the Muses, who, with loving care, carried his battered body to the foot of Mount Olympus and there gave it burial.

There to this day, more sweetly than in any other land, the nightingale breathes its song. For it sings of a love that knows no ending, of a life after death, of a love so strong that not even death the all-powerful can conquer it. And, in the song of this bird, may be heard the wonderful music of the heartbroken lover.

8. ARACHNE

In a far off village in Greece on the shores of the sunny Mediterranean, dwelt a very poor family of peasants. While the mother was busy cooking the simple meals for her family and the father who was a fisherman, casting his nets to earn a few coppers, their lovely daughter, fair Arachne spent her days in spinning at her wheel.

For this work, she was famed throughout the pleasant land of Greece, and not common folk alone, but noble warriors and beautiful ladies used to come to watch her deft fingers moving to and fro, on the fine spun threads, and to note with what skill she used her needle to embroider delicate designs on the filmy webs she had woven.

So far, indeed had her fame spread that a report of it reached Pallas Athené, the goddess of such arts, to whose inspiration, men said, this low-born maiden owed her skill. But such statement stung Arachne to the quick, for she considered it a slight on her to even hint that her skill was not self-found.

One day, as once again the remark was passed in her presence that to Pallas' aid surely she must attribute her cunning, the maiden tossed her pretty head and said.

"Athené indeed ! I fear to compete with neither God nor Mortal ! I am ready to try my skill in a weaving match with her, and then men will see, which can do better. I, at least, doubt not what the result of such a contest would be."

"Nay, do not speak with such temerity, fair daughter," said a feeble old woman in a shabby grey cloak, who stood by, as Arachne uttered this blasphemous challenge, "Experience and age will bring wisdom to you, and you will sorrowfully regret having spoken thus. Be advised by me, seek Athené's forgiveness while you yet have time. If you are truly sorry, she will forgive you. Remember that no mortal handwork is so good that it cannot be improved."

Now, Arachne had been made proud and vain-glorious by her deftness, and by the way in which men extolled the beauty of her work, and in fierce anger, she turned to the old woman, and hotly made reply.

"Foolish old woman, keep your advice until it be asked for. Go and try to domineer over your own children and order them about. I shall say and do exactly what I please. I need no lesson from any goddess. If Athené be what you say and so much more skilful than I, let her try her art against mine. I verily believe that she is afraid to pit her skill against mine, lest peradventure, she get the worst of the combat."

At this, an angry light came into the old woman's eyes; the crutch on which she had been leaning was suddenly transformed into a shining spear; she dropped her cloak, and lo, there stood the goddess herself.

"She is here, rash maiden," cried fair Pallas in a queenly voice. "A rash challenge have you made, and now shall you see what a goddess can do, and the punishment she will mete out to braggarts such as you."

Arachne flushed to her temples with astonishment and then turned pale as death, but even then she would not deign to ask for pardon. She quickly regained her confidence and boldly proclaimed that she was ready to put her skill to the test.

Two looms were set up, and the eager rivals, stately Pallas Athené and foolish Arachne, stood side by side, and each began to weave her tapestry.

For her design, the goddess chose the gods set in state on high Olympus with Zeus the all-terrible in the centre. Around this central group were sketched tableaux of impious mortals brought to judgment, rebellious giants turned to stone, and many such-like scenes, fit to inspire fear and dread in the boldest and most presumptuous of men. Round the whole was a border of olive leaves as sign whose handwork this was, for the olive was the tree sacred to Pallas Athené.

The irreverent Arachne did not take the hint conveyed in this tapestry, nor would she heed the warning. She chose as her subjects, ancient tales of many foolish acts performed by the gods, stories that cast shame and derision on the dwellers of the heavenly realms. Her border was composed of the leaves of the vine, leaves sacred to Dionysius the god of revelry and dissipation among the Greeks.

But these scenes were so cunningly worked, so skilfully blended, that one could believe that the whole was real, and all the more offensive for its truth.

And so felt the goddess as she gazed at the completed tapestries placed side by side. With a cry, half of envy,

half of indignation, she tore the offending cloth to pieces and rained blow after blow on the offending creator of such a masterpiece.

Suddenly the goddess struck her a blow on her brow. Then, little by little, Arachne shrank into the form of a tiny creature, yet to what a hateful, hideous shape! "For her features disappeared, the golden hair, that had been her pride, fell off, her delicate limbs shrivelled up, and in terrible anger, Pallas Athéné cried "Since you consider yourself such an expert spinner and weaver, you shall do nothing else but spin and weave for the rest of your life."

Thereupon, Arachne, in her new shape, ran quickly into the first dark corner she could find. She had now to earn her living by spinning webs of exceedingly fine texture in which she caught flies. So to her was given the name "Spinner."

Today her descendants are very numerous. They are now known, not as spinners, but as spiders, and their delicate webs fine and gauzy, often cover the grass on a morning when the day is to be fine.

9. CLYTIE.

At the present moment, the sunbeams are dancing gaily to and fro amid the flowers of the garden and ripening the fruit with their gentle warmth. The bees are humming round the beds of fragrant mignonette, and drowsily flittering about among the sweet-scented roses. On the old grey house, the birds drowsily bill and coo, as they preen their brilliant plumages and all nature wears a benignant air. All save that long row of tall yellow flowers in the far corner of the garden. They boldly turn their faces towards the sun, as if pleading in an imploring manner

to the great god of the sun as he drives his blazing chariot across the face of the heavens. Why do they turn with loving looks to great Apollo? The answer must be sought in the shady nooks and ever-green glades of ancient Greece.

Clytie was a water nymph, who, early every morning, used to rise from the depths of her clear stream along with other nymphs and dance among the reeds on its bank. But with the earliest rays of the morning sun, all the dancers had to flee back into the water and disappear from view. Such was the law that governed the lives of these maidens of the rivers.

But there came a day when Clytie broke this stringent rule. When the sun began to rise over the crest of the eastern horizon, and all the other nymphs disappeared to their cavern homes far from the view of men, Clytie, alone sat still on the bank of her stream and waited the arrival of the sun-god. There she sat, as Phoebus drove his horses across the sky, and, as he passed, he looked down so that his face was mirrored in the stream. Never again did she hide from the golden-haired immortal, who from that very moment became the lord of her heart and the object of her eternal devotion. All day did she follow him with her longing gaze, nor did she cease to regard him till the last reflection of his glory had faded away from the western sky.

Devotion, such as this, might well have touched the heart of even the sun god, but he had no wish for a love he had not sought. He had no interest in her adoration, nor was he even moved by pity, when he saw, day by day, that her face was growing thinner and thinner, and that her lovely form was wasting away. For nine long days and nine still longer nights did she watch for him. Only one word of love did she crave, but that one word was not

granted her, for Apollo, full of wrath and scorn, passed her by without deigning to see her more than he saw the humblest blade of grass that grew around.

Yet, though he had no pity for her, the hearts of the other dwellers in high Olympus were touched by her intense misery.

"A flower shall she be", decreed the Father of Gods and men, "and for all time shall she live, spending the warm summer days in ceaseless adoration of the god of her love."

And as they walked, her dainty feet, that had danced so lightly with the other nymphs, took root in the loose sand beside the river bank, her garments, that had fluttered to and fro in the caresses of the gentle western Zephyrs, became green leaves and her face, which was always turned to the sun, became a lovely yellow flower.

Evermore,—the emblem of unrequited love and constancy—does she gaze on the face of her beloved. As a well-known poet so aptly puts it,

"The heart that has truly loved never forgets,
But as truly loves on to its close:
As the sunflower turns on her god when he sets
The same look that she gave when he rose."

10. THE PLEIADES.

"Many a night I saw the Pleiades, rising through
the mellow shade,
Glitter like a swarm of fireflies"

When, at night, we gaze up into the starry heavens, wonder at the beauties mirrored there, and ponder over their mysteries, we are doing and thinking just those very

things which people of all lands have done and thought for many thousands of years. Long, long ago when this world of ours was still young, people would look up at the stars and wonder what they were, what duties they performed, how they came there, and where they came from. The night skies of Greece are especially beautiful and glorious, and the people who used to live there in the far-off past, loved to watch the stars, and tell stories about them. Here is the story they used to relate about that lovely constellation, "*The Pleiades*."

In the far-off west, near the realms of the setting sun, lived a mighty monarch, a giant in stature, called King Atlas. His special pride was his lovely garden—the garden of the Hesperides, where golden fruit hung on all the trees and where all was fair and lovely. He himself, for a terrible crime he had committed against great Zeus, was condemned to bear on his mighty shoulders the dome of heavens, and this task he performs by night and day for ever and ever.

To attend to this lovely garden was the pleasant duty of his seven beautiful daughters, who were called "*The Pleiades*". When they were not occupied with this task, they followed Artemis, the goddess of the chase, for they were her nymphs. They loved this sport especially in the spring, when they would run with their goddess mistress down the woodland glades, seen only by the gay beams of the morning sun, which forced their way through the thickly clustered foliage into the forest clearing. Here the flowers peeped shyly from the grass, while the birds warbled gently on every green tree-top.

One day, after an especially hard morning spent in the chase, Artemis lay resting on the green sward, while her nymphs strolled away, talking and laughing together, yet ever keeping a watchful eye on their mistress. Suddenly a

rustling of leaves and a snapping of branches arrested their attention, and there stepped into the pathway immediately before their gaze, a tall, handsome young hunter. The Pleiades knew that this must be the young Orion for, although they had never seen him before, the goddess Artemis, who was very fond of him, had lavished many gifts upon him and had often described his manliness and charm to them. Moreover, to add to their certainty that this was the hunter, his dog Sirius, without whom never did Orion go out hunting, came running up and fawned before his gallant master.

The nymphs were very shy, for never before had they seen a mortal man, and when Orion recovering a little from his surprise, and in sudden admiration would have spoken to them, in terror they turned and fled. But closely did Orion follow them, imploring them to stay and speak to him. The Pleiades, however, were very fleet and sure of foot, and their terror gave wings to their feet so that the more he called to them, the faster did they run. Far over hill, far over dale, did they run until nightfall with Orion pressing hard at their heels, calling to them to wait, and telling them, that, from him, they had nought to fear. But the voice of a mortal man increased rather than quietened their fear, and, at last, when they were quite worn out and fit to drop, Orion was so close to them that he could almost grasp the last of them by her girdle. Exhausted and desperate, they called on Great Zeus, the father of the gods to have pity on them and save them.

From high Olympus, great Zeus heard their prayer and answered it, for, forthwith, Orion saw rising from the ground, seven white doves where, the moment before, had been seven nymphs.

All night long, Orion gazed up at the sky, watching them soar up towards the heavens, and as they vanished

from his eye, he saw a new cluster of stars appear where he had last seen the seven doves. Great Zeus had given them a place of honour in the sky, because he was pleased, that in their distress, they had not forgotten to call to him for aid.

And there, to this day, at certain seasons of the year may we see the group of Pleiades, but, if we take the trouble to count them, we shall find not seven but six, for long after they had been transformed when the town of Troy was destroyed by the Greeks, the Pleiades were so sorrowful at the sight, that they grew pale and one of them faded right away, and never since have the eyes of mortal men been able to perceive her.

II. ORION THE HUNTSMAN.

Of all the starry dwellers, perhaps the most interesting and beautiful, is Orion the Huntsman, of whom we heard a little in our last story. It is only in winter and early spring time that we can see him facing towards the south. We see him arrayed for the chase, as he used to be, when, as a mortal, he dwelt in ancient Greece. His jewelled belt, circled around his waist, holds his brightly-shining hunting knife; in his right hand he swings a mighty club, while, in his left, he holds up a shield. The gods were kind to him and gave him as his companions in the heavens, his two faithful friends on this earth of ours, his two dogs, Sirius and Procyon.

When, in days long since gone by, Orion was a dweller on this earth, he was a tall, handsome man and a famous hunter. His golden locks hung down his head in silky curls, while from his bronzed and handsome face, incessantly twinkled a pair of keen and piercing grey eyes. His

limbs were massive and bronzed, while his whole figure was that rather of a god than of a man. He was, indeed, a fitting mate for any maiden, mortal or immortal.

His first love was the fair Merope, daughter of Oenopion, but her he neglected, preferring the pleasures of the chase to those of courtly love. To punish him for his unkind behaviour, the wrathful Oenopion, with the assistance of his father the god Dionysius, deprived Orion of his sight. Sad at heart, did Orion wander near and far, for no longer could he follow his favourite pastime. For him, no longer did the hunter sound his horn, nor the hounds bay in hot pursuit of the weary stag. All day long, he wandered aimlessly about, stricken with sorrow and grief.

At last, the very gods took pity on his distress, and he was bidden by the Oracle of mighty Apollo at Delphi to expose his eyes to the rays of the rising sun, and then might he hope to recover his sight. Gladly did the sight-bereft man seek the isle of Lemnos, and at early dawn face the east in eager expectation of the arrival of the great sun-god. As the rays of the sun began to caress his face, and stream upon his eyes, he felt their miraculous effect, and long ere the sun had reached his midday course, Orion could once again perceive the beauties that Nature spread before his eyes.

In grateful thankfulness for the mercy vouchsafed to him the penitent hunter dedicated himself to Artemis, the goddess of the chase, and forsook most mortal company in order to do honour to her, whom he considered to be his benefactress.

Day after day, he lived in the forest shade, hunting with his two dogs Sirius and Procyon, and daily did he offer the fruits of his labours to the honour of great Artemis. It was not long ere Artemis perceived his devotion, and she, in turn, fell in love with the handsome young mortal. Hand in hand, they used to wander 'neath the

shade of the forest, and along its green paths, and oft and long did they sit by the banks of the clear streams, whispering to each other, the sweet nothings for which lovers, through the ages, have ever been noted.

Alas for them ! Apollo, indignant at his sister's affection for one whom he considered as unworthy of such a great love, betrayed him. Apollo came one day to the edge of the blue Ægean Sea with his sister and after many bantering words asserted that she, the very goddess of the chase, could not hit a mark at any great distance away.

Indignantly did Artemis deny this base report, and urged that he should then and there test her skill with the bow. Her brother looked around, as if for some mark, and then, on the water, he pointed to a distant mark which he claimed she would unfailingly miss. Carefully did Artemis thread her arrow to her bow, with care did she take aim, and then, without the least hesitation, she let fly. She did indeed hit the mark but oh ! at what a cost ! That point to which the treacherous Apollo had directed her aim, was the head of Orion, who, tired and weary after a long day of hunting, had been cooling himself by swimming in the cool, pellucid waters.

What grief now filled the heart of fair Artemis. She tore her garments in despair, her lovely hair hung tangled and disordered o'er her face, nor would she be comforted. Her brother, seeing her sorrow and realising that nought would now cheer her, did his best to atone for the wrong he had done her. He pleaded with great Zeus that Orion might be placed among the heavenly constellations, and so become immortal. The Father of the Gods, in his gentle kindness, granted the prayer of his beloved son, and so now we see Orion placed among the stars with his belt, his sword, his club, his shield and his two faithful hounds.

12. URSUS THE BEAR.

Watching the open heavens the imaginative Greek wove patterns in the sky, and turned many of the groups of stars, or constellations, into people or animals. Then he let his fancy free, and many stories or myths grew up and were told and retold about the dwellers in the stars.

In the Greek tales of the olden times we read of the gods or rulers who lived on the top of a mighty mountain in Greece, called Olympus, the peak of which rose high above the clouds.

Their chief was the powerful Zeus, whom the Romans called Jupiter, or Jove, and who was also called by the early poets "the father of the gods and king of men." Juno was his queen (though he had other wives), and she was very proud and stately, for, of course, all the other rulers, to say nothing of men and women, were forced to bow down before her. and woe betide any one that made her angry! The ruler of the moon was Diana, who was very lovely, and who was attended by a number of beautiful maidens, dressed in robes of dark blue and silver.

One of these lovely attendants of Diana was named Callisto, with whom at one time, Juno was very angry, because she was jealous of her beauty and because Jupiter had made her one of his wives. So the Queen of Olympus turned Callisto into a bear, and she was forced to roam about the thick forests on the tops of the high mountains.

Now Callisto left a little son whose name was Ursus, who grew up to be a clever and fearless hunter. He loved best of all to hunt the rough bears, and would sometimes spend a whole day in tracking one to its den.

One day he was just about to kill a big she-bear when something mysterious seemed to check him. He could

not work his bow ; somehow, his arms seemed to be growing shorter, and when he looked at them he saw that they were becoming very hairy. Then his legs began to grow thick and hairy too, his face grew longer, while his ears became pointed, and moved to the top of his head.

How he found at last that he had been changed into a bear we do not know. Perhaps there was a clear pool not far away and this would serve him as a mirror. At all events, there he was, a shaggy bear, while not far away stood the big bear that he had been hunting and had intended to kill.

It was Jupiter himself who had stayed his hand, and made him assume his new shape. He was sorry for mother and son, and thought that the best thing that could be done was to make them both alike ; for even he dared not anger Juno by changing Callisto into a woman again.

There was one more thing he could do to shew them kindness. He lifted them up into the sky among the stars, so that we may truly say that they had risen in the world, quite as high as any one could ever hope to rise.

Of course Juno was angry at the favour that had been shown to Callisto and her son. So she went off in a terrible rage to Neptune, the ruler of the sea, who was a relative of her own, whose sceptre was a trident, and who rode through the waves in a shell-chariot, drawn by white horses with tossing manes.

She told him all about what had happened and Neptune was struck with a bright idea. "When night draws to a close" he said, "the other stars sink into the sea and cool themselves. We will not let the Great Bear and the Little Bear do this at all. We will make them always move round and round the Pole Star which never sets."

Juno was greatly pleased, and went back to her home on the high mountain quite content. And since that time

the Great Bear and the Little Bear have kept the places given to them, and never sink into the sea.

13. PHILOMELA AND PROCNE

Tereus, the ruler of Thracia, was a powerful and skilful warrior, but also a man of vindictive heart; for when the beautiful Philomela, the sister of his wife, Procne, visited his royal home he ordered his servants to cut out her tongue, and then shut her up, pale and trembling, in the deep recesses of an old wood, far from her home and kindred. Here she was treated as a prisoner, and left deserted, unable even to express her misery and so find what relief may lie in lamentation.

The cruel king then returned to his palace, and when Procne asked for her sister he wept false tears and gave vent to many a deceiving sigh; then he told a false story of the death of Philomela and left his wife to mourn the loss of her beloved sister.

Philomela was helpless. Her place of imprisonment was carefully guarded; but, after a time, she devised a plan for letting her sister know of her wrongs and her situation. On her loom she wove a wonderful web, and showed in a picture how cruelly the king had treated her.

This web she was able to send to Procne by the hand of one of her guards who was full of pity for her unhappiness. Her sister instantly grasped the meaning of the woven story and was struck dumb with grief, which soon gave place to a burning desire for revenge. She went at once to the house in the depths of the wood, and greeted with grief and sorrow the sister who had been so cruelly wronged.

The hearts of the women were now possessed by such a desire for revenge that it extinguished all natural feeling of affection; for they slew Itys, the son of Tereus, and gloried in their guilt.

When Tereus learnt of the death of his son, he took his spear in his hand and set out in hot pursuit of the two sisters. They ran before him, and so swiftly did pursuer and pursued pass through the air that wings came upon the shoulders of each of them.

Philomela flew into the shady wood, and, in the shape of a nightingale, alighted upon a thorn and poured forth her song of sorrow and of pain. Procne darted round and round, and, in the form of a swallow swift upon the wing, was able to evade the pursuit of her angry husband. And Tereus, changed into a lapwing, his long spear turned into a sharp bill, his royal helmet into a crest, pursued them both, but always in vain, for he halted continually as he went.

14. IRIS

The Greeks of olden days, worshippers of nature, used to tell the following story about the rainbow.

There were once kings and queens, lovely maidens, and handsome youths who lived in the sky and the clouds, on the hills and mountains, in the woods and rivers, and even in the swelling ocean. And the tops of the highest mountains held up the deep blue sky.

The Sun King often came down to the top of a high mountain named Olympus, to visit his beautiful queen who lived there. Around the home of this queen were clouds which seemed from the top of the mountain to look

like beds of fleecy down. But to the people in the world below the clouds were often dark and threatening, for they did not see the silver lining.

The Sun King and the Cloud Queen had a daughter who was even more lovely than her mother. Her name was Iris, and she wore a robe of all the most beautiful colours that had ever been seen.

Iris sometimes went down from Olympus to the earth below ; for her father would send her to carry his messages to the people who lived in the valleys and on the plains, and by the sounding sea.

The Sun King and the Cloud Queen had built for Iris a wonderful bridge leading from Olympus to the lower world. It was shaped like a bow, with the two ends resting upon the earth, and the topmost arch in the sky ; and its colours were red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and violet. When this bridge was lowered, each end was fixed to the earth by a heavy pot of gold.

Iris loved the waters of the rivers and the sea ; for in their sparkling drops, as well as in the drops of dew, she often saw reflected the colours of her lovely robe, and of her bridge from Olympus to the earth.

She loved also the flowers that grew upon the earth, and when she kissed them they took on the colours of her robe. One flower which grew by the water, and in the shady places of the wood, became deep deep, blue in colours ; and Iris loved it so well that she gave it her own name.

15. PANDORA'S CHEST

Long, long ago there lived a little girl named Pandora, who was the happiest child that ever lived at any time or in any country.

She had all the things she needed to make her happy. I do not need to name these things, for you can easily make a list for yourself and I expect your own list will be somewhat different from that of any one of your friends.

Pandora had a boy playmate, whose name was Epimetheus ; but somehow I think that she did not use this long name when she spoke to him. Perhaps you can guess what she would call him.

The two playmates had a very merry time together. They lived in a little cottage with a red roof and with roses peeping in at the windows. When they wanted a meal they went into the garden and took what they needed from the trees.

One sunny day a man came to Pandora's cottage with a big black chest on his shoulder. He was rather different from other men, for he had a cap with wings, and there were wings on his ankles also.

"I am very tired," he said to Pandora. "May I leave this heavy chest with you, until I have occasion to come round this way again?"

"Of course you may" replied Pandora sweetly.

"But please do not try to open the chest," said the man, "or you will be very sorry, and so will all your playmates."

"I should never dream of doing such a very rude thing," said Pandora. Then the man smiled brightly and went off at such a great speed that he seemed to skim along the surface of the earth like a swallow.

For a time all went well. Pandora played all day, and slept soundly at night. Then she began to take more notice of the black chest.

It was made of wood, and was carved in a very wonderful manner. There was no lock, but there was a cord tied round it, knotted above the lid. Pandora played with the knot and said to herself,

"I wonder what there is in that box? If I could raise the lid and take only one peep! It would not do any one any harm and I could easily tie up the knot again."

Then Epimetheus came in, and she told him what was in her mind. He looked at her in great surprise. "Why, Pandora," he said, "surely you would never think of doing such a thing. Come out and play with me, and forget all about the silly old box."

Pandora went out to play, but she was not so happy as she had been before; and her playmate was very sad to see her look so unhappy.

One day, when she was alone, Pandora untied the knot, and the cord at once fell to the ground. Then she lifted the lid of the chest just a little and peeped within.

All at once there was a loud buzzing about her ears, and she felt something sting her forehead. She looked up and saw a swarm of insects around her head. At the same time the room seemed to grow very dark.

Pandora dropped the lid of the box as her playmate came in. He had some flowers in his hands for her, but one of the insects stung him on the cheek, and he threw the flowers down with a cry of pain.

"Pandora," he cried, "you have broken your promise, and now we shall never be happy again."

He seemed to know, without being told, that the buzzing insects were the first Troubles that were ever seen in the world — such things as Bad Temper, Greed, Sulks, Pains and Aches of many kinds.

The window of the cottage was open, and the insects flew out into the open air. And in a short time the two friends heard many cries of pain and fear from the other children who were playing in the fields beside the cottage of Pandora.

Pandora and Epimetheus sat in silence on the floor of the cottage feeling very sad. Then the boy began to scold his companion, and this made Pandora burst into tears. All at once they heard a gentle tap on the inside of the lid of the chest.

"Let me out! Let me out!" cried a small but very cheerful voice.

"Don't open that nasty box again," said the boy. "You will only make matters worse."

"I feel that I must open it," said Pandora, and she did so without more delay. Then a pretty little fairy flew out of the chest and lightly kissed the two children on the places where the insects had stung them.

"Who are you?" asked Pandora in great delight.

"My name is Hope," said the fairy. "We cannot get the nasty Troubles back into the box again, but we can try to keep out of their way. I will stay near you always, and whenever you are stung again will cure you in the way I have shown you."

"Thank you! thank you!" cried the children both at once, and then they ran out into the fields hand-in-hand. And Hope went with them, hovering always above their heads.

16. THE SWORD OF DAMOCLES

Long ago, in the beautiful isle of Sicily, lived a king, Dionysius by name, a tyrant so notorious for the cruel treatment he dealt to his subjects that he went in daily fear of his life ; for he was well hated by all around him, and many, given a fair chance, would gladly have slain him.

But Dionysius was by no means ignorant of this fact, and he took every care to have himself well watched over by a loyal band of soldiers.

Now, Dionysius, though a tyrant, was fond of literature and the arts, and managed to surround himself with men distinguished for their learning in science, letters and the arts in general, though, it must be admitted that many of his guests went in fear and trembling as long as they were at the court.

Like most tyrants, Dionysius was surrounded by a horde of flatterers who tried to curry favour with him by all sorts of extravagant praise of his undoubted talents, and perhaps the best known of these stupid individuals was Damocles, a courtier who was for ever lauding the happiness of kings in general and of his own king in particular.

Had Dionysius been a weak and vain king he might have been pleased with such empty flatterers, but he was not, and being, moreover, possessed of a sense of humour, he at last determined to amuse himself at the expense of Damocles and at the same time to teach that foolish man a lesson he would never forget.

So, one day, he said to the servile Damocles " my friend, since you are for ever harping on the joys of sitting on a throne, I will give you a taste of that happiness you praise so much. Tomorrow I will give a banquet to all my nobles and you shall take my place at the head of the

table and experience the pleasure of being a king, though I rather fancy that at the end of the banquet you will gladly resign your seat and become a mere subject once again."

When the hour of the banquet drew nigh, Damocles, arrayed in fine purple robes, was bidden by the king to take his seat on the dais, while a golden crown was placed on his head and the guests were instructed to honour him as they would have done Dionysius himself.

At first Damocles greatly enjoyed his unusual position, and found the compliments and flattery of his adulating companions very pleasant indeed; but, suddenly, he received a terrible shock and would gladly have abandoned his lofty position had not the king sternly commanded him to stay where he was.

He had chanced in his pride to throw his head high in the air, and to his horror he beheld a very sharp, naked sword, suspended by a single hair, immediately above his own head. At once he realised that if the delicate hair were to break, and it seemed very likely to do so at any minute, he would immediately be killed, so, terrified at the thought, he begged permission to change his seat.

"Nay," said the crafty monarch with a cruel smile "king you wished to be, and you must play out your part. Perhaps you will learn from the position in which you find yourself now that it is a very foolish thing to envy the state of kings who, in very truth, go in constant dread of their lives, and, who never know when ill may befall them. Brave, indeed, are those men who can smile and appear happy and contented in such circumstances. Let me see, good Damocles, if you are made of metal such as they."

But the now terrified Damocles was a craven at heart, and so fear stricken was he that he could not swallow

another mouthful of food, and did nothing but fix his gaze on the sword suspended above his head. Oft did he plead with the tyrant that he might be removed from his position, but the cruel monarch, gloating over his victim, sternly refused his consent until the banquet should be over, and he took care that it should be prolonged for several hours.

Then only was Damocles freed from the position he had so willingly accepted, but which now he was only too glad to surrender, and be allowed to resume his own garments once again. He never forgot the lesson that he had learned, that a high position carries, along with honour and glory, responsibility and danger, and never again did he pour his fulsome flattery into the ears of King Dionysius.

17. THE TALE OF THE WOODEN HORSE

Long ages ago, there stood on the shores of Asia Minor a famous city named Troy, which was ruled by a king by name Priam. This king had a son called Paris, who at one time left his father's court to travel across the sea to the land of Greece.

While he was travelling in that country, he visited the court of a king, whose name was Menelaus, and who had a wife more beautiful than any woman who had ever lived. So beautiful, indeed, was this queen, that the young Paris, not only lost his heart to her, but he also lost his sense of what was honourable and manly. For, having one day persuaded Helen to go out with him upon the sea in his ship, he quickly sailed away from her home, and carried her off to Troy.

Menelaus, who was in his royal palace, soon learned what had happened. He lost no time in making known the base deed of Paris to all the kings and princes of Greece, and they banded themselves together to sail for Troy, in order to rescue Helen and punish Paris for having carried off the queen.

For ten years, they besieged the city, but its walls were strong and its defenders brave. Many deeds of great valour were done in the plain by the sea on which the Greeks were encamped, and the story of the long contest has been handed down from age to age.

At last, however, the princes of Greece began to grow weary of the siege, which promised indeed, to have no end ; and they met in council to form a plan for taking the city by cunning. Then they gave orders for a great wooden horse with a hollow body to be prepared ; and they hid within it a band of their bravest men, fully armed and ready for battle.

When this had been done, the rest of the Greeks made for their ships, went on board, and set sail as if they meant to return to their homes. They did, indeed, sail out of the harbour ; but when they reached a rocky island not far away, they anchored their ships out of sight of the watchers on the city walls, and awaited the result of their artful plan.

The Trojans were filled with joy when they saw the departure of their foes, and they flocked out of the city, within whose walls they had been confined for so long. With shouts of joy, they ran to and fro among the deserted tents of the Greek soldiers, and before long they came to the place where stood the lofty wooden horse.

They gazed in wonder at the huge animal, and some among them said that it ought to be taken within the

city as a trophy of war; but others were more doubtful, and advised its destruction; and one man among them cried out, "O foolish people, have you not yet learned how wily the Greeks can be? I fear the Greeks, even when they bring gifts, and it is my belief that this monster contains, within its hollow sides, a number of our hated foes."

Then he threw his spear against the flank of the horse, and it stuck fast in one of the joints, while a rattling sound came from within. But, as if they were doomed to be misled and conquered, the crowd of Trojans paid no heed to the warning. Meanwhile, some of them, who had been searching among the tents, had found a single Greek, whom they made captive and carried before their king.

The man was trembling in every limb, and his eyeballs rolled about in terror.

"Who and what are you?" they asked him; and when he had at last found his voice he said, "I am a Greek, and my name is Sinon. I am at your mercy. Do not keep me long in suspense."

But wishing to hear his story, the Trojans cheered him with kind words, and told him to take heart. After a few moments he spoke again, and said,—

"The Greeks, some time ago, determined to raise the siege and go back to their homes; and when they prayed to their gods for a safe return, it was told to them that only, by the sacrifice of one of their number, could this boon be gained."

"I was chosen, wretched man that I am, for the sacrifice, and put in bonds to await the appointed hour. But I broke from my chains, and having made my escape, lay in hiding until they sailed away."

Then the man ceased, and looked slyly round upon his hearers to mark the effect of his story upon them.

"But the wooden horse!" cried several in a breath, "Why was it made?"

"To gain the favour of the gods," was the ready answer: "and it was built of this huge size in order that it might not be dragged within your walls and win for you the protection of the gods. For if it be taken within the city, the day will surely come when the Greeks will serve the Trojans."

Then there arose among the crowd a demand that the wooden horse should be at once taken inside the walls of the city; and without waiting to consider further, the work of making a wide breach in the wall was begun. Then ropes were fastened to the fore legs of the monster, and, to the sound of merry music, it was dragged within the lofty walls. So great were the ardour and excitement of the people that none of them heard the clash of armour and groans of warriors which came from within the wooden horse as it was dragged merrily along.

For the rest of the day the Trojan people gave themselves up to merriment; and, when night came on, they went to rest without setting guards upon the walls.

In the dead of night, the Greeks came back. Once more they landed upon the shore, and a picked body of men were taken by the wily Sinon to the place where the wooden horse had been left. At once the door in its side was opened, and the Greek warriors, weary of the discomfort of their strange lodging, were glad enough to jump out upon the ground.

In a few moments the gates were opened and the Greeks flocked within the walls of the city, which for ten years they had tried in vain to take by force. Then there arose within the place the cries of alarm and the shouts of victory. Blood ran like water, and Troy became the prey of the victorious Greeks.

18. ULYSSES AND THE CYCLOPS.

When the City of Troy had fallen, the Greeks set out for their homes. Among them was Menelaus whose wife had been restored to him. But of those who set out so gaily from Troy, all did not return home easily. Too many wandered far ere they reached the shores of Greece again, and of these wanderers the most famous was Ulysses who passed through many perils and had many strange adventures before he saw his native shores again.

Perhaps the most curious of these adventures was the meeting with the Cyclops. One morning, in the course of his travels, Ulysses and his men came by daybreak to the land where dwelt the Cyclops—a sort of giant shepherds that neither sow nor plough. The earth, untilled, produces for them rich wheat, barley and grapes; yet they have neither bread nor wine, nor know the arts of cultivation, nor care to know them: for they keep each man to himself, without laws or government, or anything like a state or kingdom.

Their dwellings are in caves, on the steep sides of lofty mountains, every man's household governed by his own caprice, or not governed at all. Their wives and children are as lawless as themselves, none caring for others, but each doing as he or she thinks good. Ships or boats they have none, nor artificers to make them, no trade or commerce, no wish to visit other shores; yet they have convenient places for harbours.

Here Ulysses, with a chosen party of twelve followers, landed to discover what sort of men dwelt there, whether hospitable and friendly to strangers, or altogether wild and savage; for as yet no dwellers appeared in sight.

The first sign of habitation which they came to was a giant's cave, rudely fashioned, but of a size which betokened the vast proportions of its owners. The pillars which

supported it were the trunks of huge oaks or pines, in the natural state of the tree, and all about showed still more marks of strength than skill in whoever built it.

Ulysses, having entered, longed to see the tenant of so outlandish a mansion. So, taking with him a goatskin flagon full of Greek wine, he ventured with his company into the recesses of the cave. Here they pleased themselves a whole day with beholding the giant's kitchen, where the flesh of sheep and goats lay strewed, his dairy, where goat-milk stood ranged in troughs and pails, his pens where he kept his live animals.

While they were feasting their eyes on these strange sights, their ears were suddenly deafened with a noise like the falling of a house. It was the owner of the cave who after having been abroad all day feeding his flock, as his custom was, in the mountains, was now driving them home in the evening from pasture. He threw down a pile of firewood, which he had been gathering to make a fire on which to prepare his supper, before the mouth of the cave; and this caused the crash they had heard.

The Greeks hid themselves in the remote part of the cave, at the sight of the uncouth monster. It was Polyphemus, the largest and savagest of the Cyclops, who boasted himself to be the son of Neptune. He looked more like a mountain-crag than a man, and, with his brutal body he had a brutish mind to match. He drove those of his flock that gave milk, to the inner part of the cave, but left the rams and the he-goats without.

Then taking up a stone, so massy that twenty oxen could not have drawn it, he placed it at the mouth of the cave to defend the entrance, and sat him down to milk his ewes and his goats; which done, he kindled a fire, and throwing his great eye round the cave (for the Cyclops have no more than one eye, and that placed in the middle

of their forehead), by the glimmering light he discerned some of Ulysses' men.

"Ho ! guests, what are you ? Merchants or wandering thieves ?" he bellowed out in a voice which took from them all power to reply.

Only Ulysses found courage to answer, that they came neither for plunder nor traffic, but were Greeks who had lost their way returning from Troy ; which famous city they had sacked, and laid level with the ground. Yet now they knelt humbly before his feet, whom they acknowledged to be mightier than they, and besought him that he would be hospitable to them, for that Jove was the avenger of wrongs done to strangers.

"Fools," said the Cyclops, "to come so far to preach to me the fear of the gods. We Cyclops are stronger than they ; and dare bid open battle to Jove himself, though you and all your fellows of the earth join with him."

And he bade them tell him where their ships in which they came, had been left, and whether they had any companions. But Ulysses, with craft, made answer that they had no ship or companions, but were unfortunate men whom the sea, splitting their ship in pieces, had dashed upon his coast, and they alone had escaped.

He replied nothing, but gripping two of the nearest of them as if they had been no more than children, he dashed their brains out against the earth, and (shocking to relate) tore in pieces their limbs and devoured them yet warm and trembling, making a lion's meal of them, even lapping the blood. At a sight so horrid, Ulysses and his party were like men distracted.

The Cyclops, when he had made an end of his wicked supper, drained a draught of goat's milk down his prodigious throat, and lay down and slept among his goats.

Then Ulysses drew his sword, and half resolved to thrust it with all his might right into the bosom of the sleeping monster. But wiser thoughts restrained him, else they had all perished there. For none but Polyphemus himself could have removed that mass of stone which he had placed to guard the entrance. So they were constrained to abide all that night in fear.

When day came, the Cyclops awoke, and, kindling a fire, made his breakfast, of two more of his unfortunate prisoners. This done, he milked his goats as was his habit, and pushing aside the vast stone and shutting it again when he had gone out upon his prisoners, with as much ease as a man opens and shuts a quiver's lid, he let out his flock and drove them before him with whistlings (as sharp as winds in storms) to the mountains.

Then Ulysses, of whose strength and cunning the Cyclops seems to have had as little heed as of an infant's, being left alone with the remnant of his men, which the Cyclops had not devoured, gave manifest proof how far manly wisdom excels brutish force. He chose a stake from among the wood, which the Cyclops had piled up for firing, in length and thickness like a mast, which he sharpened and hardened in the fire. Then he selected four men and instructed them what they should do with this stake, and made them perfect in their parts.

When the evening was come, the Cyclops drove home his sheep; and as fortune directed it, either of purpose or that his memory was overruled by the gods to his hurt (as in the issue is proved), he drove the rams of his flock, contrary to his custom, along with the ewes into the pens; then shutting to the stone of the cave, he fell to his horrible supper. When the giant had dispatched two more of the Greeks, Ulysses waxed bold with the thought of his plan, and taking a bowl of Greek wine, merrily dared the Cyclops to drink.

"Cyclops," he said, "take a bowl of wine from the hand of your guest; it may serve to digest the man's flesh that you have eaten, and show what drink our ship held before it went down. All I ask in recompense, if you find it good, is to be dismissed with a whole skin. Truly you must look to have few visitors, if you observe this new custom of eating your guests."

The brute took and drank, and, keenly enjoying the taste of wine, which was new to him, swilled again at the flagon, and entreated for more. Then he asked Ulysses to tell him his name, that he might bestow a gift upon the man who had given him such brave liquor. The Cyclops (he said) had grapes, but this rich juice was simply divine.

Again, Ulysses plied him with the wine, and the fool drank it as fast as his guest poured out. When the Cyclops again asked the name of his benefactor, Ulysses answered with cunning: "My name is Noman; my kindred and friends in my own country call me Noman."

"Then," said the Cyclops, "this is the kindness I will show thee, Noman; I will eat thee last of all thy friends."

He had scarce expressed this savage kindness when the fumes of the strong wine overcame him, and he reeled down upon the floor and sank into a dead sleep.

Ulysses watched his time while the monster lay insensible. Heartening up his men, he bade them place the sharp end of the stake in the fire till it was heated red-hot. Then, some god giving them a courage beyond that they were used to have, the four men bored the sharp end of the huge stake, which they had heated red-hot, right into the eye of the drunken cannibal. Ulysses, for his part, helped to thrust it in with all his might, still farther and farther, with effort, as men bore with an anger, till the eye hissed, as hot iron hisses when it is plunged into water.

The Cyclops waking, roared with the pain so loud that all the cavern broke into claps like thunder, while the Greeks fled and hid in corners. Plucking the burning stake from his eye, the giant hurled it madly about the cave. Then he cried out with a mighty voice for his brethren Cyclops, that dwelt hard by in caverns upon hills.

Hearing the terrible shout, the other Cyclops came flocking from all parts to enquire what ailed Polyphemus, and what cause he had for making such horrid clamours in the night time to break their sleep. Did his fright proceed from any mortal? Had strength or craft given him his death blow?

Polyphemus made answer from within that Noman had hurt him, Noman had killed him, Noman was with him in the cave. "If no man has hurt thee," they replied, "and on man is with thee, then thou art alone; and the evil that afflicts thee is from the head of heaven, which none can resist or help."

So they left him and went their way, thinking that some disease troubled him.

Blind, and ready to split with the anguish of his wound, the Cyclops went groaning up and down in the dark to find the doorway; when he had found it, he removed the stone and sat in the threshold, feeling if he could lay hold on any man going out with the sheep, which (the day now breaking) were beginning to issue forth to their accustomed pasture.

But Ulysses, whose first trick, in giving himself that name of double meaning, had succeeded so well with the Cyclops, was not so simple as to be caught by that device. Casting about in his mind all the ways which he could contrive for escape (no less than all their lives depending on the success), at last he thought of this plan.

He made knots of the osier twigs upon which the Cyclops commonly slept, and with these he tied the fattest and fleeci-est of the rams together, three in a rank. Then under the middle ram he tied a man, and himself last, wrapping himself fast with both his hands in the rich wool of one, the fairest of the flock.

And now the sheep began to issue forth very fast; the rams went first, the ewes un milked stood by, bleating and requiring the hand of their shepherd in vain to milk them. Still as the rams passed, the Cyclops felt the back of those fleecy fools, never dreaming that they carried his enemies underneath; so they passed on till the last ram came, loaded with his wool and Ulysses together.

Then Cyclops stopped that ram and felt him, and had his hand once in the hair of Ulysses, yet knew it not. He chid the ram for being last, and spoke to it as if it understood him, asking whether it did not wish that its master had his eye again, which that hateful Noman with his wretched rout had put out, when they had got him down with wine. And he willed the ram to tell him whereabouts in the cave his enemy lurked, that he might dash his brains and stew them about, to ease his heart. After a deal of such foolish talk to the beast, he let it go.

When Ulysses found himself free, he let go his hold, and helped to loose his friends. The rams which had befriended them they carried off with them to ships, where the Greeks who had been left behind received with tears in their eyes their returning companions, as men escaped from death.

Going on board they plied their oars and set their sails. When they were got as far off from shore as a voice would reach, Ulysses cried out to the Cyclops: "Cyclops, thou should'st not have so much abused thy monstrous strength

as to devour thy guests. Jove, by my hand, sends thee requital to pay thy savage cruelty."

The Cyclops heard, and came forth enraged, and in his anger he plucked a fragment of a rock, and threw it with blind fury at the ships. It narrowly escaped lighting upon the bark in which Ulysses sat : but with the fall it raised so fierce an ebb as bore back the ship till it almost touched the shore.

"Cyclops," said Ulysses, "if any ask thee who imposed on thee that ugly blemish in thine eye, say it was Ulysses ; the king of Ithaca am I called, the waster of cities."

Then they crowded sail, and beat the old sea with their oars, and forth they went with a forward gale ; sad for past losses, yet glad to have escaped at any rate.

19. STORIES OF HERCULES.

(1) THE BOYHOOD OF HERCULES.

The best beloved of all the heroes, famous in Greek Song, was Hercules. He was loved by the Greeks above all other men, because of his great strength and bravery, qualities that were very dear to the dwellers in the ancient world.

No mere mortal indeed was he, for, it is said, that no less a personage than great Jove himself, was the sire of this great hero. His mother was the lovely princess Alcmena. When the hour of his birth was near, the great monarch of the heavens proclaimed that the child to be born that day should be ruler over all Greece. He had,

however, not reckoned on the hatred that Hera, queen of heaven, bore her step-son, nor did he know that in her anger, she had caused his cousin Eurystheus to be born first, so that it came about that Hercules was doomed to serve his ignoble kinsman.

Hercules performed his first brave deed when little more than a year old. Hera, hot with spite, had sent two snakes to kill the babe in his cradle. While his mother slept, these two huge serpents crawled into the place where the infant child was lying. The snakes raised their heads above his cradle and, with their wicked little eyes, looked down on the lusty child, but waited for some movement ere they should strike. But Hercules awoke with a shout that roused his anxious mother and as she raised her lamp, she saw, at her dismay, that her wondrous child had caught a serpent in each chubby little fist and had strangled them ere they could do him harm. Alcmene, in her turn, aroused her husband King Amphytryon, who stood amazed at the feat of his foster son. Well might he stand amazed, for, when he came to the side of the cradle, there sat young Hercules, holding two great snakes, and crowing with pleasure as though he had found some new toy.

Next day, he sent for a wise old seer, called Tiresias to cast the child's fortune, and that old prophet now let him know the descent of Hercules, and foretold that, when he grew up, he should be stronger than any other mortal who had ever lived, and that he should perform twelve wondrous labours and after his death should dwell on Mount Olympus in the bosom of the gods.

With such a destiny in view, Amphytryon spared no pains in the education of this marvellous foster-son. He was trained with great care in all the things that Greek boys used to learn. Amphytryon himself taught the young Hercules to tame horses and to drive a chariot.

From every corner of the isles of Greece were the most skilled and clever teachers brought to instruct the youth in music, in shooting, in boxing, in sports of all kind, and in wrestling. To complete his education, he was made one of that band of young heroes, who were trained under the care of the wise old Centaur Chiron, where Jason was one of his companions.

When he was nearly full-grown, he went to live for a time among his father's herdsmen on the wild and lonely mountain sides. He loved to wander here and there, probing the secrets of nature, getting inspiration from her beauties and increasing his strength from the surmounting of her obstacles. One day, as he was wandering in a lonely spot in one of the mountain valleys, he seemed to come to two roads, and, so suddenly, that he could not tell which to follow. One looked very smooth, level, and easy, and looked as if it led to a beautiful city, so near, that he could see its inhabitants wandering about the streets. Pleasant trees lined its roads giving shade from the scorching heat of summer, while many lovely gardens skirted its sides. The other was a steep mountainous path hard and laborious to climb. It led straight up the rough, bare mountain side, where no shelter could be obtained from the heat. Steeper and steeper it seemed to become until at length, it was lost to sight in the white capped clouds.

As Hercules stood at the cross roads, pondering in his mind which road he should choose, he was accosted by a lovely damsel, arrayed in beautiful clothes, and crowned with a wreath of roses. She saw that the young man was in doubt as to the road he should choose and quickly advised him to take the broad road that led to the city "There" said she, "you will never want rich food and drink. Never will you need to work, in the heat or dust,

but you may dwell in pleasant gardens all day long amid the songs of the birds, and the music of the harp. No strife or suffering is there, but joy and contentment.

As Hercules gazed towards the city, the prospect seemed so very alluring that he felt as though he would follow the advice of his fair charmer. Yet something seemed to hold him back, and, just then, he saw another maiden by his side. Not as the other was she dressed but in plain white garments, and her grave eyes had a look of sadness in them.

"My name," she said, "is Duty. Listen to me, young hero, and I will tell you the truth, for my sister Pleasure has been deceiving you."

"The pleasant things of which she has spoken are either not worth having or must be paid for at a price of which you little dream. Do not be lured by her specious wiles, or dearly will you rue this day. Only follow me. My path most truly is not strewn with ease and pleasures and I can promise you but that labour and suffering, without which no man can gain the best gifts of the gods. Yet, if you have courage to climb high enough, this rugged path will lead you at length to Mount Olympus, and there shall you dwell for ever with the gods as immortal as they."

"Nay," cried Pleasure with a sneering laugh "rather tell him how he may come to die betimes on that dangerous path of thine!!"

"True," murmured Duty, though she smiled kindly as she spoke. "But those who are worthy to follow my path consider its dangers, nay, even death itself, preferable to living in sloth and folly with thee."

For a short time the hero stood, hesitating which guide to follow, but, not for long, and unflinchingly he chose that which his heart told him was right, and he gave his hand

to Duty. Thus was made the choice of Hercules whose worst suffering was to come when he strayed from that weary road and sought the primrose path of pleasure.

(2) THE TWELVE LABOURS OF HERCULES.

Not long after the events just described, Hercules set out with Duty as his guide to become, in time, the most renowned hero of his age. His one object in life was to help the oppressed and downtrodden among mankind, and, to assist him in this good work, Gods, as well as men, lent him their aid. From Athenè, he received armour, Hermes gave to him an invincible sword, and from great Zeus himself, he obtained a famous shield. But one of the immortals was implacable in her hatred of this son of Zeus, and this was great Hera. She drove the valiant hero into a fit of madness, in which he killed his children and drove his wife away from him. When he recovered his senses, and realised what he had done, he fell into a great melancholy, and sought pardon by prayer and fasting. To expiate his fault, he was condemned to be the vassal of his kinsman, Eurystheus, and to do ten weary errands for this base king, ere he should again be free. Thus decreed the Oracle at Delphi.

Forthwith he presented himself at the court of Eurystheus, ready to perform any task that the king might set him. At the sight of his bold young cousin, Eurystheus, in anger at his superior strength and beauty of countenance, resolved to set Hercules, the hardest and most dangerous tasks that he could think of. Each successive labour was a little harder than the last one and carried the hero still farther from home and friends, and a little nearer to the unknown western world, till, in the last one, he reached the very gates of Hades itself where Dis, the dark and sullen king of the underworld, held sway amid the souls of the departed.

(a) The First Labour.

Near the sacred grove which enclosed the temple of Zeus in Nemea, a wild and fierce lion, known far and wide as the Nemean lion, had its lair. It was a savage monster, that long had kept the surrounding districts in fear and trembling, for it was laying waste all the countryside. It went out by day as boldly as by night, and killed hundreds of cattle and sheep, and occasionally even men or women, if they happened to be within its reach.

It seemed to Eurystheus, that it would be a good plan to send Hercules to kill this terrible creature. So he assigned this as the Hero's first task.

Armed only with his bow and with a wild olive tree, tough and full of knots, which he pulled up by the roots to act as a stout club, he set off alone to the Nemean valley, where the lion had its den. Not a soul could he find to guide him to his prey, for all the dwellers of that vale were sore afraid, and kept indoors, abandoning their flocks to its mercy.

Hercules, therefore, waited and kept watch by the temple all the day. Then, as night was falling, and all the light fading from the western skies, he heard a fearsome roar. The lion was returning home. Roar after roar resounded through the still air, until, at length, the animal came into view. Its mane was clotted and tangled with blood, and from its chops it was licking fresh blood. Hercules fitted an arrow to his bow, took careful aim and then let fly. But the lion was invulnerable to all weapons and turning towards the hero, it crouched and prepared to spring upon him. Then flinging away his weapons, Hercules darted out from the thicket where he had been concealed, flung himself upon the angry creature, cast his arms around its neck, and slowly strangled it, as, in his infancy, he had strangled the two snakes in his cradle.

Then he flayed the dead beast, and clothed himself with its skin, using its head as a kind of helmet. So terrible, indeed, did he appear in such guise, that, on his return to the palace, the cowardly king shrank from meeting him, but sent a servant with his further orders.

(b) *The Killing of the Lernean Hydra.*

This second task that was planned for Hercules, was one which made the first appear child's play in comparison. For when he saw that Hercules had done so well in the task set him, King Eurystheus sent him to the marshes of Lerne to kill the hydra which had its dwelling there.

Now the hydra was a monstrous water serpent, with nine heads, one of which could not be hurt by any mortal weapon, while the remainder would grow again as fast as ever they were struck off. So very pestilent was it, that the very air round its haunts killed people. Its lair was near one of the very few fountains of Argolis, and as this fact prevented the country folk who lived in that district from using the water of that fountain, it was a very serious matter, for in Greece, the summers are long and dry, while the rivers and fountains from which water can be drawn, are very few indeed.

Accompanied by his nephew Iolaus, our hero set off for Lerne. A long and dusty walk, through country lanes and across hills and valleys, brought the pair of heroes to the spot where the hydra dwelt, and the first thing they saw was the hydra itself, rearing its nine heads aloft, and hissing a warning with every head.

Undismayed, Hercules, alone, met its attack and set to work cutting off its head with his sword. Then to his consternation and amazement, two more heads sprang up on the cloven neck of the one he had just struck off, and the same thing happened each time he aimed a blow. Our

hero now began to lose heart, for he felt that his great strength could avail him nothing in this impossible task, especially as the foul creature twisted its loathsome body round his limbs and almost stifled him.

Then, in his agony, he suddenly received help from the Goddess of Wisdom, great Pallas Athene, who caused him to call out to young Iolaus to set fire to the trees around and to keep him supplied with blazing torches. Iolaus did so. Then as Hercules cut off a head, his young kinsman seared each wound so that another could not grow in its place. This he did till all the heads, save the immortal one, were destroyed. With a courage sprung from desperation, the mighty warrior crushed this head with his club, wrenched it off from the body and buried it far below the ground, with a huge rock on top to prevent it from doing any further mischief. In its poisonous blood, the victor dipped his arrows to make the wounds that they should give, fatal ones. Bitterly was he to regret in the future that he had meddled with the deadly poison, but now he returned triumphant to his task master, who, by way of thanks, set him another labour to be performed, immediately.

(c) *The Capture of the Arcadian Stag.*

In the mighty forests, bordering on the state of Arcadia, dwelt a very swift stag, which oft had eluded the hunters of that region. Few men, indeed, had seen it, and fewer still believed that it was an ordinary animal, for strange were the stories that the hunters related about it. If one could believe all that was said, its antlers were of gold and its hoofs of solid brass; certain it was that it could take enormous bounds; and no matter how long it was chased by the hounds it never seemed tired; and as it has been seen very often browsing near the temple of Artemis, most people believed it was sacred to that goddess and under her protection.

As his third labour, Hercules was ordered by Eurystheus to go in search of this stag, to capture it, and to bring it back to him alive.

So the hero, fulfilling his destiny, set off to the forests of Arcady, and, having hidden himself in the thick shrubs round the temple, watched all the paths leading to that holy spot. A weary watch indeed it was ! The hot summer sun poured down its pitiless rays upon his head ; a fierce thirst consumed him ; flies buzzed around his face ; mosquitoes stung him ; while, from the ground, myriads of tiny ants crawled all over his body. All day long did he keep his vigil, and as the evening shadows closed, and night was beginning to cast her sable mantle all around, he began to think of seeking shelter and repose till next day. Then, suddenly, before his eyes, appeared the golden antlered stag. What a wonderful creature it was ! He felt that he had been well repaid for his long and lonely vigil, for never before had he seen so beautiful a creature, and he could readily realise, why men considered it as sacred to a goddess.

Hercules quite understood that never again might he be granted a glimpse of this elusive creature and he determined not to lose his opportunity. As soon as he saw it, he dashed out from his place of hiding, and then began a long and bitter chase.

For a year it led him out of Greece to Thrace, from Thrace to wilder and still more rocky countries ; and then far into the northern solitudes. Still it kept on, never seeming to tire, until, at last, it began to show signs of fatigue. The stern chase was nearly at an end, for now it led its pursuer back to the temple of Artemis. Panting and exhausted the weary stag ran into the temple while Hercules followed it into the sacred courts themselves, and caught it.

But just as he was about to pick it up, Hercules saw the mighty goddess herself standing in front of him. She was

tall and stately, and terrible did she look in her anger at the harm done to her own stag. But Hercules pleaded with her and, won over by his charm and frank manner, the goddess granted him his prayers and consented that he should bear the stag to Eurystheus in proof that he had carried out the duty laid upon him by that vindictive monarch, and so, in triumph he returned to the court, and laid his trophy at his kinsman's feet.

(d) *The Capture of the Erymanthian Boar.*

King Eurystheus now set Hercules a grimmer task by far, and sent him to catch a wild boar that was ravaging the district round Mount Erymanthus. It was not that he wanted the boar alive, but, that he thought that Hercules was so skilful in the chase that he would succeed in killing any dangerous creature. and he knew that in setting him the task of bringing back such a creature alive, he was setting him a far more difficult duty.

On his way to this adventure, Hercules, against his will, was the cause of a strange battle. In the mountains of Arcadia he paid a visit to a friend of his, Pholus the centaur, who lived in a mountain cave. Pholus welcomed him with joy, and wished to entertain him. So he set before him a fine repast, but no wine, for of wine he had but one cask, given to all the centaurs in common by the God Dionysius, a cask, which was not to be opened unless all the race was present. Hercules, who was thirsty, persuaded Pholus to break open the cask, and when the rich fumes of the wine spread into the woods, the other centaurs came up, armed with pine branches, rocks, torches, - anything they could lay their hands on, - and rushed into Pholus' cave. Seeing Hercules and ignorant of whom he was, or why he was there, they fell upon this stranger. But the hero defended himself stoutly, and with his poisoned arrows, forced the centaurs to take

shelter in the cave of his old teacher Chiron. That good centaur was wounded in the fray by a stray arrow, which, dipped in the hydra's poison, killed him in slow agony. Pholus, too, that kindly host, was also killed by chance, for, when the battle was over, he picked up one of the arrows, and while he was looking at it with intent curiosity, he let it slip from his hand and dropped it on his foot. That wound also soon proved fatal, and, for the first time, though not for the last, the sad Hercules wished that he had never dipped his arrows in the deadly venom of the hydra.

After he had laid to rest the remains of the friends to whom he had brought such suffering, he held on his way to the haunts of the Erymanthian boar, which he drove from the forests up to the bare mountain peaks, and having wearied it with chasing it through deep snow drifts, he bound it with ropes and brought it home alive to the court at Mycenæ.

This was the end of the fourth labour.

(e) *The Cleaning of the Augean Stables.*

After King Eurystheus had quite recovered from the surprise he had felt at the success of Hercules, he set his wits to work to think of something really difficult for that intrepid hero to perform. The crafty monarch told him that, in one day, and unaided, he must clean the stables of Augeus, King of Elis. This monarch who was one of the heroes that had sailed with Jason in search of the Golden Fleece, kept fifty thousand cattle, but for thirty years had not troubled to clean the enclosures heaped with their filth. When he saw Hercules and heard what he had come for, he laughed heartily, and promised him one-tenth of his herds, should he be able to perform a task which seemed beyond the power of a giant, let alone of a mere human being. But Hercules was a crafty man, as well as strong, and his

brain devised a scheme, whereby he might hope to succeed in his task.

The rivers Peneus and Alpheus flowed close to the stables. So Hercules dug a new course for their waters, knocked a hole in the stable walls, and diverted the waters into their new channel. On the waters swirled. For a moment, it seemed as though their course would be checked by the huge and solid mass before them, but the force of the waters behind added fresh vigour to those in front and soon they poured through the stables. By the end of the day they were as clean and fresh, as when they were newly built. Then Hercules returned the waters to their original bed, closed up the holes, and went to Augeus to claim his promised reward. That monarch, furious at the success of Hercules in a task he had considered impossible of accomplishment, in anger, drove him from his court with the prizes he had gained. But, when he returned to Mycenæ, the base king Eurystheus refused to count this task among the ten labours ordained by Apollo, because the hero has accepted a reward for his work, and sent him forth on yet another task.

(f) *The Destruction of the Birds of Stymphalis.*

This task was none other than the destruction of the birds of prey which haunted the valley of Stymphalis and which, as you may remember, had troubled the voyage of the Argonauts. These birds, which had their breeding place in a lake in the valley, did great damage to the crops and to the cattle, for it was a very common thing for them to kill a sheep or a goat and feed on its carcass. Moreover, they had been known to carry off human beings and devour them. They had iron-like claws, and their feathers, which were sharp like arrow heads, could be hurled by them at their foes.

So many of them were hovering round their nests, that Hercules did not, at first, know how to deal with them. But Athene, once again, came to his rescue, and, giving him a huge bell, told him to hold his shield above his head to protect himself from the birds' feathers, and with the bell to make a noise, far louder than the screeching of the birds. He did so, and the birds, startled by the awe-inspiring noise, flew up into the air, trying to escape from such a place of terror. Hercules was kept busy ringing the bell until such time as every bird had left the wood, save half a dozen which, braver than the rest, had remained behind on the tallest trees. These he easily shot down, and those that had escaped were so terrified, that never again were the people in Greece troubled by them.

(g) *The Capture of the Cretan Bull.*

The seventh labour of Hercules was to conquer a bull that roamed madly through the island of Crete, inspiring everyone with terror.

Minos, king of Crete, had wished to offer up a sacrifice to great Zeus. So, on the shores of his island home, he built an altar and prayed to Poseidon, King of the Sea and asked him to send an animal fit for such a great sacrifice. It was not long ere his prayer was answered, and from out the waves there came a snow-white bull, with horns of silver. So beautiful was it, that Minos was enchanted with its appearance, and when he found that it was gentle as well as perfect, he desired to keep it and instead of offering it in sacrifice on his altar, he led it to his fields and loosed it amidst his own herds.

But bitterly was he to rue this act of folly, for Poseidon had sent the bull to be sacrificed to Zeus and for no other purposes. In anger at the desecration of his offering he caused it to lose its kindly nature, and to become wild and

dangerous. It roamed through the woods of Crete, and was a source of terror and danger to every one, for it did not fail to attack whatever chanced to come in its way, were it man or beast.

So King Eurystheus sent Hercules to capture this fierce monster, hoping that in the struggle that would ensue, he might be killed. When he arrived in Crete and came to the court of Minos, that monarch gladly gave him leave to chase down this pest that had worked such havoc in his realm,

Armed only with his club, Hercules went into a wood which had been pointed out to him as the favourite haunt of the bull and waited by a limpid stream. As the monster came to drink, it caught sight of him, bellowed wildly and rushed up to attack him, tossing its silver horns in frantic rage. Hercules cast his club to the ground, and caught the bull by the horns. Then began a wrestling match such as mortal eye had never seen before, nor ever since has viewed. The bull tossed and twisted, roared and champed, seeking to get free and gore its opponent, but now Hercules' great strength served him well, and he held the furious animal firmly, in spite of its struggles, until, at last, it sank exhausted to the ground.

When the bull saw that it had found its master, its former gentle disposition came back to it, and it followed Hercules like a lamb. Afterwards on his return journey to Mycenæ, Hercules let it swim across the sea, while he sat on its back. When he had reached the court, he handed it over to Eurystheus.

(h) *The Capture of the Horses of Diomeues.*

In Thrace there dwelt a fierce and savage king named Diomedes, reputed to be a son of Ares, god of War. Little cared he for the sacred laws of hospitality and if by

chance a stranger entered his dominions, he was seldom heard of again.

He owned a splendid pair of horses, but these steeds were as savage as their master. So vicious and treacherous were they that an ordinary halter was useless for keeping them in check and they had to be kept in restraint by means of steel chains. Throughout the realms of Diomedes, it was whispered, – for the people were so terrified of their king that they dared not breathe the story aloud, – that the reason why these horses were so fierce was that they were given human flesh as their daily food. In this way only, could the disappearance of so many strangers be accounted for.

King Eurystheus sent Hercules to bring these horses to his court, and once again, in order to make the task more difficult, he ordered him to bring them back alive.

When he arrived in Thrace, Hercules discovered that all the stories he had heard about the tyrant Diomedes were true. So he went at once to the king's palace, overpowered the guards, forced his way into the very presence of the monarch himself and after a hard fight took him prisoner.

Then he went to the stables and cast the tyrant to his own horses, which ate him up as eagerly as if he had been a complete stranger to them. Curious to relate, no sooner had they finished their meal than their fierce nature seemed to leave them and they let Hercules drive them away as peacefully as if they had been lambs. He took them back to Mycenæ and handed them over to King Eurystheus who was torn between two feelings, joy at receiving such a valuable gift, and sorrow at the return of Hercules.

(i) *The Capture of Hippolyte's Girdle.*

Far away from Greece, on the Caucasus Mountains and near the shores of the Black Sea, lived a race of warlike

women called Amazons. Hippolyte, their queen, had a very famous girdle which was reputed to have been given to her by the god of war itself. This belt had the magical property of making the Amazons almost invincible in war. The Greeks had, more than once, had to fight this race of women and had found them very formidable opponents.

King Eurystheus longed to have this girdle as he thought that, with it, the Greeks might be able to fight the Amazons on more than equal terms. So he sent Hercules to fetch it.

Far across the Ægean Sea sailed Hercules, through the Black Sea right to the country of the Amazons. Hippolyte and some of her attendants came on board his ship to see who had come among them. When she discovered who the famous hero was, she welcomed him and so admired his great stature and well knit form, that she gave him the famous girdle as a free gift. But Hera, taking the form of an Amazon, stirred up this virago people against him, by raising the cry that a stranger was carrying off Queen Hippolyte by force. Then ensued a long and bitter fight, ere Hercules was able to escape with the girdle. On reaching home, he presented the famous girdle which was set with jewels and heavy with gold to King Eurystheus. This was the end of his ninth labour.

(7) *The Capture of the Oxen of Geryon.*

Far away, across the western ocean, lay the island of Erytha, the home of the giant Geryon. This Geryon was a most monstrous giant. He had three bodies, three heads, six arms, and six feet, being the offspring of the foul Medusa, who had been slain by Perseus. He had an enormous herd of red cattle which he kept at night in a dark cave under the guard of his two-headed dog, Orthrus.

The tenth labour of Hercules, which should have been the last, was to fetch this herd of cattle to King Eurystheus. The more he toiled for his kinsman, the more the cowardly king hated him through envy of his daring, and now, hoping to be rid of him for ever, Eurystheus sent him so far away from home against such a terrible foe. Yet Hercules set off cheerfully, undismayed by the thought of the dangers that lay before him.

Reaching the Straits of Gades, he then set up two landmarks, known to this day as the Pillars of Hercules. To help him on this long voyage he borrowed the famous golden cup of the sun-god Helios. This cup would float on rivers like a boat, and had the peculiar power of becoming larger or smaller according to need. In it Hercules was borne far, far west, farther than anyone before him had ever yet dared to venture. At length, after many days, he arrived at his island destination.

As he stood on a lofty mountain peak looking all over the land to discover where the herd of Geryon was grazing, he was suddenly attacked by the savage two-headed watch dog. Turning around, he killed the furious beast with one blow of his huge club, but he had hardly had time enough to draw a deep breath before he was attacked by the hard-man, who was quite as fierce as the dog. Undismayed, brave Hercules seized him by the throat, and, with relentless hands, soon crushed the life out of him also.

Then he saw the cattle grazing hard by with never a guard near them, and, forthwith, he began to drive them away. Now, however, he was perceived by Geryon himself, and that wild giant came striding towards him, swinging a club in each of his six hands and roaring threats of vengeance from each of his throats at once. But our undaunted hero remembered his poisoned arrows, and he sent one of them straight to the heart of the giant so that the

huge monster came trembling to the ground with a crash, never to rise again.

Then Hercules gathered the cattle together, drove them into the golden cup of Helios, and sailed back to Mycenæ where he handed them all over to Eurystheus and claimed his freedom

(k) *The Golden Apples of the Hesperides.*

The mean-minded king, however, still claimed his services, and refused to count two of the tasks that Hercules had accomplished among the necessary ten; the slaying of the Hydra, because there Hercules had had the help of his gallant nephew, and the cleaning of the Augean Stables, because he had been paid for that by Augeus. So there still remained two tasks to be done, more difficult than any yet accomplished.

The first of these was to pluck three Golden Apples from a garden given by Ge, the mother of the earth, to Zeus and Hera when they were wedded. This garden was called the Garden of the Hesperides, from the nymphs of that name, daughters of sable Night, who were its attendants, and it had, for its guardian, a many-headed dragon which never slept.

No man could give Hercules any information as to where this garden lay. Some said it lay far to the west, others that, on the contrary, it was to be found far to the north. So Hercules journeyed on until he came in his wanderings to the pleasant land of Italy. As he went on his way he continually asked whether that were the right way to the famous garden, but none of the country folk knew anything about the matter, and some even laughed in his face, saying that he must be mad; for the garden of the Hesperides was, in their opinion, far beyond the reach of man.

So he journeyed on and on, still making the same enquiry, until at last he came to the brink of a river, where some beautiful young women sat twining wreaths of flowers.

"Can you tell me, pretty maidens", asked the stranger, "whether this is the right way to the garden of the Hesperides?"

"The garden of the Hesperides"! cried one. "We thought mortals had been weary of seeking it, after so many disappointments. And pray, adventurous traveller, what do you want there?"

"A certain king, who is my cousin," replied he, "has ordered me to get him three of the golden apples that are to be found there."

"Most of the young men who go in quest of these apples", observed another of the damsels, "desire to obtain them for themselves, or to present them to some fair maiden whom they love. Do you, then, love this king, your cousin, so very much?"

"Perhaps not," replied Hercules sighing. "He has often been severe and cruel to me. But it is my destiny to obey."

"And do you know," asked the damsel who had first spoken, "that a terrible dragon, with a hundred heads, keeps watch under the golden apple tree?"

"I know it well," answered the hero calmly. "But from my cradle upwards it has been my business and almost my pastime to deal with serpents and dragons."

The young women looked at his massive club, and at the shaggy lion's skin which he wore, and likewise at his heroic limbs and figure; and they whispered to each other

that the stranger appeared to be one who might reasonably expect to perform deeds far beyond the might of other men. But then, the dragon with a hundred heads! What mortal, even if he possessed a hundred lives, could hope to escape the fangs of such a monster? So kind-hearted were the maidens that they could not bear to see this brave and handsome traveller attempt what was so very dangerous, and devote himself most probably to become a meal for the dragon's hundred ravenous mouths.

"Go back," cried they all, "go back to your own home: Your mother, beholding you safe and sound, will shed tears of joy; and what can she do more should you win ever so great a victory? No matter for the golden apples! No matter for the king, your cruel cousin! We do not wish the dragon with the hundred heads to eat you up!"

Hercules seemed to grow impatient, at these remonstrances. He carelessly lifted his mighty club and let it fall upon a rock that lay half-buried in the earth near by. With the force of that idle blow the great rock was shattered all to pieces. It cost the stranger no more effort to achieve this feat of a giant's strength than for one of the young maidens to touch her sister's rosy cheek with a flower.

"Do you not believe," said he, looking at the damsels with a smile, "that such a blow would have crushed one of the dragon's hundred heads? Know that I am Hercules."

"We have already guessed it," replied the maidens; "for your wonderful deeds are known all over the world."

And Hercules rejoiced, as any other hero would have done, to know that these fair young girls had heard of the valiant deeds which had cost him so much toil and danger to achieve. But still he was not satisfied. He

could not think that what he had already done was worthy of so much honour, while there remained any bold or difficult adventure to be undertaken.

"Dear maidens," said he, when they paused to take breath, "now that you know my name, will you not tell me how I am to reach the garden of the Hesperides?"

"Ah! must you go so soon?" they exclaimed, "You that have performed so many wonders, and spent such a toilsome life, cannot you content yourself to repose a little while on the margin of this peaceful river?"

Hercules shook his head. "I must depart now," said he.

"We will then give you the best directions we can," replied the damsels. "You must go the sea-shore, and find out the Old One, and compel him to inform you where the golden apples are to be found."

"The Old One!" repeated Hercules, laughing at this odd name. "And, pray, who may the Old One be?"

"Why, the Old Man of the Sea, to be sure!" answered one of the damsels, "He has fifty daughters, whom, some people call very beautiful; but we do not think it proper to be acquainted with them because they have sea-green hair, and taper away like fishes. You must talk with this Old Man of the Sea. He is a seafaring person, and knows all about the garden of the Hesperides; for it is situated in an island which he is often in the habit of visiting."

Hercules then asked whereabouts the Old One was most likely to be met with. When the damsels had informed him, he thanked them all for their kindness—for the bread and grapes with which they had fed him, the lovely flowers with which they had crowned him, and the songs and dances wherewith they had done him honour,

—and he thanked them most of all, for telling him the right way, and immediately set forth upon his journey.

But before he was out of hearing, one of the maidens called after him :

“Keep fast hold of the Old One, when you catch him !” cried she, smiling, and lifting her finger to make the caution more impressive. “Do not be astonished at anything that may happen. Only hold him fast, and he will tell you what you wish to know.”

Hercules again thanked her, and pursued his way, while the maidens resumed their pleasant labour of making flowery wreaths. They talked about the hero long after he was gone.

“We will crown him with the loveliest of our garlands,” said they, “when he returns hither with the three golden apples, after slaying the dragon with a hundred heads.”

Meanwhile Hercules travelled constantly onward, over hill and dale, and through the solitary woods. Sometimes he swung his club aloft, and splintered a mighty oak with a downright blow. His mind was so full of the giants and monsters with whom it was the business of his life to fight that perhaps he mistook the great tree for a giant or a monster. And so eager was Hercules to achieve what he had undertaken that he almost regretted to have spent so much time with the damsels, wasting idle breath upon the story of his adventures. But thus it always is with persons who are destined to perform great things. What they have already done seems less than nothing. What they have taken in hand to do seems worth toil, danger, and life itself.

Persons who happened to be passing through the forest must have been affrighted to see him smite the trees with

his great club. With but a single blow the trunks were riven as by the stroke of lightning, and the broad boughs came rustling and crashing down.

Hastening forward without ever pausing or looking behind, he, by and by, heard the sea roaring at a distance. At this sound he increased his speed, and soon came to a beach, where the great surf waves tumbled themselves upon the hard sand in a long line of snowy foam. And what should Hercules espy there but an old man fast asleep !

But was it really and truly an old man? Certainly, at first sight, it looked very like one; but on closer inspection it rather seemed to be some kind of a creature that lived in the sea. For on his legs and arms there were scales, such as fishes have; he was web-footed and web-fingered, after the fashion of a duck; and his long beard, being of greenish tinge, had more the appearance of a tuft of sea-weed than of an ordinary beard. But Hercules, the instant he set eyes on this strange figure, was convinced that it could be no other than the Old One, who was to direct him on his way.

Yes, it was the self-same Old Man of the Sea about whom the hospitable maiden had talked to him. Thanking his stars for the lucky accident of finding the old fellow asleep, Hercules stole on tiptoe towards him, and caught him by the arm and leg.

"Tell me," cried he, before the Old One was well awake, "which is the way to the garden of the Hesperides?"

You must understand that the Old Man of the Sea, though he generally looked so much like the wave-beaten figurehead of a vessel, had the power of assuming any shape he pleased. When he found himself so roughly seized by Hercules, he had been in hopes of putting him into such surprise and terror by these magical transformations that the hero would be glad to let him go. If Hercules had

relaxed his grasp, the Old One would certainly have plunged down to the very bottom of the sea, whence he would not soon have given himself the trouble of coming up, in order to answer any impertinent questions. Ninety-nine people out of a hundred, I suppose, would have been frightened out of their wits by the very first of his ugly shapes, and would have taken to their heels at once. For one of the hardest things in this world is to see the difference between real dangers and imaginary ones.

But as Hercules held on so stubbornly, and only squeezed the Old One so much the tighter at every change of shape, and really put him to no small torture, he finally thought it best to reappear in his own figure. So there he was again a fishy, scaly, web-footed sort of personage, with something like a tuft of sea-weed at his chin.

"Pray, what do you want with me?" cried the Old One as soon as he could take breath; for it is quite a tiresome affair to go through so many false shapes. "Why do you squeeze me so hard? Let me go this moment, or I shall begin to consider you an extremely uncivil person!"

"My name is Hercules;" roared the mighty stranger. "And you will never get out of my clutch, until you tell me the nearest way to the garden of the Hesperides".

When the old fellow heard who it was that had caught him, he saw at once that it would be necessary to tell him everything that he wanted to know. The Old One was an inhabitant of the sea, you must recollect, and roamed about everywhere, like other seafaring people. Of course he had often heard of the fame of Hercules, and of the wonderful things that he was constantly performing in various parts of the earth, and how determined he always was to accomplish whatever he undertook. He therefore made no more attempts to escape, but told the hero how to find the garden of the Hesperides, and likewise warned him of many diffi-

culties which must be overcome before he could arrive thither.

"You must go on thus and thus," said the Old Man of the Sea, after taking the points of the compass, "till you come in sight of a very tall giant, who holds the sky on his shoulders. And then that giant, if he happens to be in the humour, will tell you exactly where the garden of the Hesperides lies."

"And if the giant happens not to be in the humour," remarked Hercules, balancing his club on the tip of his finger, "perhaps I shall find means to persuade him!"

Thanking the Old Man of the Sea, and begging his pardon for having squeezed him so roughly, the hero resumed his journey. He met with a great many strange adventures which would be well worth your hearing if I had leisure to narrate them as minutely as they deserve.

Passing through the deserts of Africa, and going as fast as he could, he arrived at last on the shore of the great ocean. And here, unless he could walk on the crests of the billows, it seemed as if his journey must needs be at an end.

Nothing was before him save the foaming, dashing, measureless ocean. But suddenly, as he looked towards the horizon, he saw something, a great way off, which he had not seen the moment before. It gleamed very brightly, almost as you may have beheld the round golden disc of the sun when it rises or sets over the edge of the world. It was evidently drawing nearer; for at every instant this wonderful object became large and more lustrous. At length it had come so near that Hercules discovered it to be an immense cup or bowl, made either of gold or burnished brass. How it had got afloat upon the sea is more than I can tell you. There it was, at all events, rolling on

the tumultuous billows, which tossed it up and down and heaved their foamy tops against its sides, but without ever throwing their spray over the brim.

I have seen many giants in my time, thought Hercules, but never one that would need to drink his wine out of the cup like this !

And, true enough, what a cup it must have been ! It was as large—as large—but, in short, I am afraid to say how immeasurably large it was. To speak within bounds, it was ten times larger than a great mill-wheel ; and, all of metal though it was, it floated over the heaving surges more lightly than an acorn-cup adown the brook. The waves tumbled it onward, until it grazed against the shore within a short distance of the spot where Hercules was standing.

As soon as this happened, he knew what was to be done, for he had not gone through so many remarkable adventures without learning pretty well how to conduct himself whenever anything happened to pass a little out of the common. It was just as clear as daylight that this marvellous cup had been set adrift by some unseen power, and guided hitherward, in order to carry Hercules across the sea on his way to the garden of the Hesperides. Accordingly, without a moment's delay, he clambered over the brim and slid down on the inside, where, spreading out his lion's skin, he proceeded to take a little repose. He had scarcely rested, until now, since he bade farewell to the damsels on the margin of the river. The waves dashed with a pleasant and ringing sound against the circumference of the hollow cup ; it rocked lightly to and fro and its motion was so soothing that it speedily rocked Hercules into an agreeable slumber.

His nap had probably lasted a good while, when the cup chanced to graze against a rock, and, in consequence, immediately resounded and reverberated through its golden

or brazen substance a hundred times as loudly as ever one heard a church bell. The noise awoke Hercules, who instantly started up and gazed around him, wondering whereabouts he was. He was not long in discovering that the cup had floated across a great part of the sea, and was approaching the shore of what seemed to be an island. And on that island what do you think he saw ?

A giant as tall as a mountain ; so vast a giant that the clouds rested about his midst like a girdle, and hung like a hoary beard from his chin, and flitted before his huge eyes so that he could neither see Hercules nor the golden cup in which he was voyaging. And, most wonderful of all, the giant held up his great hands and appeared to support the sky, which, as far as Hercules could discern through the clouds, was resting upon his head ! This does really seem almost too much to believe !

Meanwhile the bright cup continued to float onward, and finally touched the strand. Just then, a breeze wafted away the clouds from before the giant's visage, and Hercules beheld it with all its enormous features—eyes each of them as big as lake, a nose a mile long, and a mouth of the same width. It was a countenance terrible from its enormity of size, but disconsolate and weary, even as you may see the faces of many people nowadays, who are compelled to sustain burdens above their strength. What the sky was to the giant, such are the cares of earth to those who let themselves be weighed down by them. And whenever men undertake what is beyond the just measure of their abilities, they encounter precisely such a doom as had befallen this poor giant.

The giant now looked down from the far height of his great eyes, and, perceiving Hercules, roared out, in a voice that resembled thunder proceeding out of the cloud that had just flitted away from his face :

"Who are you down at my feet there? And whence do you come in that little cup?"

"I am Hercules", thundered back the hero, in a voice pretty nearly or quite as loud as the giant's own. "And I am seeking for the garden of the Hesperides!"

"Ho! ho! ho!" roared the giant in a fit of immense laughter. "That is a wise adventure truly!"

"And why not?" cried Hercules getting a little angry at the giant's mirth. "Do you think I am afraid of the dragon with a hundred heads?"

Just at this time, while they were talking together, some black clouds gathered about the giant's middle and burst into a tremendous storm of thunder and lightning, causing such a pother that Hercules found it impossible to distinguish a word. Only the giant's immeasurable legs were to be seen standing up into the obscurity of the tempest; and now and then a momentary glimpse of his whole figure, mantled in a volume of mist. He seemed to be speaking most of the time, but his big, deep, rough voice chimed in with the reverberations of the thunder-claps, and rolled away over the hills like them. Thus, by talking out of season, the foolish giant expended an incalculable quantity of breath to no purpose, for the thunder spoke quite as intelligibly as he.

At last the storm swept over as suddenly as it had come. And there again was the clear sky and the weary giant holding it up, and the pleasant sunshine beaming over his vast height, and illuminating it against the background of the sullen thunderclouds. So far above the shower had been his head that not a hair of it was moistened by the rain-drops.

When the giant saw Hercules still standing on the sea-shore, he roared out to him anew:

"I am Atlas, the mightiest giant in the world! And I hold the sky upon my head."

"So I see," answered Hercules. "But can you show me the way to the garden of the Hesperides?"

"What do you want there?" asked the giant.

"I want three of the golden apples," shouted Hercules, "for my cousin, the king."

"There is nobody but myself," quoth the giant, "that can go the garden of the Hesperides and gather the golden apples. If it were not for this little business of holding up the sky I would make half a dozen steps across the sea and get them for you."

"You are very kind," replied Hercules. "And cannot you rest the sky upon a mountain?"

"None of them are quite high enough," said Atlas, shaking his head. "But if you were to take your stand on the summit of that nearest one, your head would be pretty nearly on a level with mine. You seem to be a fellow of some strength. What if you should take my burden on your shoulders while I do your errand for you?"

"Hercules, as you must be careful to remember, was a remarkably strong man; and though it certainly required a great deal of muscular power to uphold the sky, yet, if any mortal could be supposed capable of such an exploit, he was the one. Nevertheless it seemed so difficult an undertaking that for the first time in his life he hesitated.

"Is the sky very heavy?" he enquired.

"Why, not particularly so at first," answered the giant, shrugging his shoulders. "But it gets to be a little burdensome after a thousand years."

"And how long a time," asked the hero, "will it take you to get the golden apples?"

"Oh, that will be done in a few moments," cried Atlas. "I shall take ten or fifteen miles at a stride, and be at the garden and back again before your shoulders begin to ache."

"Well, then," answered Hercules, "I will climb the mountain behind you there and relieve you of your burden."

The truth is, Hercules had a kind heart of his own, and considered that he should be doing the giant a favour by allowing him this opportunity for a ramble. And, besides, he thought that it would add still more to his own glory if he could boast of upholding the sky, than merely to do so ordinary a thing as to conquer a dragon with a hundred heads. Accordingly, without more words, the sky was shifted from the shoulders of Atlas and placed upon those of Hercules.

When this was safely accomplished the first thing that the giant did was to stretch himself; and you may imagine what a prodigious spectacle he was then. Next, he slowly lifted one of his feet out of the forest that had grown up around it, then the other. Then all at once he began to caper, and leap, and dance for joy at his freedom; flinging himself nobody knows how high into the air, and floundering down again with a shock that made the earth tremble. Then he laughed—"Ho! ho! ho!"—with a thunderous roar that was echoed from the mountains far and near, as if they and the giant had been so many rejoicing brothers. When his joy had a little subsided he stepped into the sea, ten miles at the first stride, which brought him mid-leg deep; and ten miles at the second, when the water came just above his knees; and ten miles more at the third, by which he was immersed nearly to his waist. This was the greatest depth of the sea.

Hercules watched the giant as he still went onward, for it was really a wonderful sight, this immense human form,

more than thirty miles off, half-hidden in the ocean, but with his upper half as tall, and misty, and blue as a distant mountain. At last the gigantic shape faded entirely out of view. And now Hercules began to consider what he should do in case Atlas should be drowned in the sea, or if he were to be stung to death by the dragon with the hundred heads which guarded the golden apples of the Hesperides. If any such misfortune were to happen, how could he ever get rid of the sky? And, by the bye, its weight began already to be a little irksome to his head and shoulders.

"I really pity the poor giant," thought Hercules. "If it wearies me so much in ten minutes, how must it have wearied him in a thousand years!"

I know not how long it was before, to his unspeakable joy, he beheld the huge shape of the giant, like a cloud, on the far-off edge of the sea. At his nearer approach Atlas held up his hand, in which Hercules could perceive three magnificent golden apples, as big as pumpkins, all hanging from one branch.

"I am glad to see you again," shouted Hercules when the giant was within hearing. "So you have got the golden apples?"

"Certainly, certainly," answered Atlas; and very fair apples they are. I took the finest that grew on the tree, I assure you, Ah! it is a beautiful spot, that garden of the Hesperides. Yes; and the dragon with a hundred heads is a sight worth any man's seeing. After all, you had better have gone for the apples yourself.

"No matter," replied Hercules, "You have had a pleasant ramble, and have done the business as well as I could. I heartily thank you for your trouble. And now, as I have a long way to go, and am rather in haste, and as the king, my cousin, is anxious to receive the golden apples, will you be kind enough to take the sky off my shoulders again?"

"Why, as to that," said the giant, chucking the golden apples into the air, twenty miles high or thereabouts, and catching them as they came down; "as to that, my good friend, I consider you a little unreasonable. Cannot I carry the golden apples to the king, your cousin, much quicker than you could? As his Majesty is in such a hurry to get them, I promise you to take my longest strides. And, besides, I have no fancy for burdening myself with the sky just now."

Here Hercules grew impatient, and gave a great shrug of his shoulders. It being now twilight, you might have seen two or three stars tumble out of their places. Everybody on earth looked upwards in affright, thinking that the sky might be going to fall next.

"Oh, that will never do!" cried Giant Atlas with a great roar of laughter. "I have not let fall so many stars within the last five centuries. By the time you have stood there as long as I did, you will begin to learn patience!"

"What!" shouted Hercules very wrathfully, "do you intend to make me bear this burden for ever!"

"We will see about that one of those days," answered the giant. "At all events, you ought not to complain if you have to bear it for the next hundred years, or perhaps for the next thousand. I bore it a good while longer, in spite of the backache. Well then, after a thousand years, if I happen to feel in the mood, we may possibly shift about again. You are certainly a very strong man, and can never have a better opportunity to prove it. Posterity will talk of you, I warrant it!"

"A fig for its talk" cried Hercules, with another hitch of his shoulders. "Just take the sky upon your head one instant, will you? I want to make a cushion of my lion's skin for the weight to rest on. It really chafes me, and

will cause unnecessary inconvenience in so many centuries as I am to stand here."

"That's no more than fair, and I'll do it" quoth the giant; for he had no unkind feeling towards Hercules, and was merely acting with a too selfish consideration of his own ease. "For just five minutes then, I'll take back the sky. Only for five minutes, recollect! I have no idea of spending another thousand years as I spent the last. Variety is the spice of life, say I."

Ah, the thick witted old rogue of a giant! He threw down the golden apples, and received back the sky from the head and shoulders of Hercules upon his own where it rightly belonged. And Hercules picked up the three golden apples, that were as big or bigger than pumpkins, and, straightway, set out on his journey homeward without paying the slightest heed to the thundering tones of the giant, who bellowed after him to come back.

And there stands the giant to this day; or, at any rate, there stands a mountain as tall as he, and which bears his name; and when the thunder rumbles about its summit we may imagine it to be the voice of Giant Atlas, bellowing after Hercules!

Hercules then gaily betook himself to Mycenae, handed over the golden spoils to Eurystheus, and boldly demanded to know what his last labour should be.

(1) *The bringing of Cerberus from the Nether World.*

The foul Eurystheus now determined to make, if possible, an end of his cousin, for he was jealous that Hercules had, in accomplishing the tasks set him, won glory and goodwill as a benefactor of men. So he chose a task that seemed beyond the might of any mere mortal, one that was, without doubt, the most difficult and dangerous of all. It was nothing less than to go down to Hades, the

realm of dark Dis, and bring back to Mycenae, the three headed hound of hell, Cerberus.

Evidently Eurystheus thought this labour would prove impossible, and that never should he have to release Hercules from his oath, for so desperate did the task appear, that it seemed as if Hercules would never return from the underworld.

Far, far away from the haunts of man, in a dark gloomy forest, was a chasm between two huge rocks. There was the entrance to Hades, dark and awesome enough to strike fear into the boldest heart. Entrance, indeed, it was, but none, who had entered there, had ever been known to return.

However, Hercules had never known what fear was and he was not afraid to venture into this dark chasm. Down he went, armed with his club, and bow and arrows. Many of the servants of Dis tried to check his progress, but he fought and stormed his way until, at last, he came face to face with the dark-browed king in person. Even for him, Hercules showed no respect; but shot an arrow into his shoulder. Roaring with pain, Dis asked his errand, and then Hercules told him what Eurystheus' orders had been, and said that he was determined to carry them out at all costs. Struck with admiration at his courage and audacity, Dis gave him leave to carry Cerberus away, provided he could master the fierce brute with his hands alone, using no weapon. Then Hercules gripped that hellish watch dog by the throat, and despite the terror of its three barking heads, its poison-dripping teeth, and its stinging tail, held it fast in a vice like grip, until, at length, he dragged it up to earth and hurled it before the feet of Eurystheus.

That craven monarch could do nothing with Cerberus but let it go. As for Hercules, triumphant as he had been in every ordeal, Eurystheus in despair, gave him his free-

dom, on condition that he put the monster back again at its fearsome post.

(3) THE DEATH OF HERCULES.

Now released from his long servitude, Hercules still wandered about the world, trying to aid his fellow-men. He gave himself no rest, for he listened to every appeal, as he felt that his life's work was to rid the world of every evil. At last came the time when, as had been foretold in his infancy, he was taken up to dwell with the gods in Mount Olympus.

In his later wanderings, he came to Calydon, where he married the beautiful Deianira. He had to fight for her with the river god Achelous, who changed himself into a snake and a bull, but, in no form, could vanquish the mighty hero.

As though the mighty river god would still harm him, his road led him to a stream in flood, where the Centaur, Nessus, stood carrying travellers across. Inflamed by the beauty of Deianira, the Centaur would have borne her off, but Hercules, on the other bank of the stream, heard her cry, and with one of his poisoned arrows, inflicted a mortal wound on Nessus. The wicked monster, in his death agony, told a lying story to the beautiful Deianira. He bade her dip a shirt in his blood and, if ever, she lost her husband's love, that should prove a potent charm to bring it back.

A few years later, Deianira was seized with senseless jealousy at the attentions her husband was showing to a noble princess, whom he had befriended. She then sent him the shirt dipped in the blood of Nessus and begged him to wear it for her sake. Without suspicion he put it on. Instantly he felt as though he were enveloped in fire, and then he realised that this was the end of all his labours.

He made a funeral pyre, mounted it, spread his lion's skin on the top, and lay down using his club as a pillow.

Then he requested a friend who was near him to set fire to the pile. With great sorrow, this friend did so. Thus perished the mortal body of the great hero, but his soul flew aloft to Mount Olympus, to live for ever among the gods, with all who are truly brave.

20. THESEUS AND THE MINOTAUR.

In the old city of Troezene, at the foot of a lofty mountain, there lived, a very long time ago, a little boy named Theseus. His grandfather was the sovereign of that country, and was reckoned a very wise man; so that Theseus, being brought up in the royal palace, and being naturally a bright lad, could hardly fail to profit by the old king's instructions. His mother's name was Æthra. As for his father, the boy had never seen him. But, from his earliest remembrance, Æthra used to go with little Theseus into a wood, and sit down upon a moss-grown rock, which was deeply sunk into the earth. Here she often talked with her son about his father, and said that he was called Ægeus, that he was a great king, and ruled over Attica, and dwelt at Athens, which was as famous a city as any in the world. Theseus was very fond of hearing about King Ægeus, and often asked his mother why he did not come and live with them at Troezene.

"Ah ! my dear son," answered Æthra with a sigh, " a monarch has his people to take care of ! "

" Well, my dear Mother," asked the boy, " why cannot I go to this famous city of Athens and tell King Ægeus that I am his son ? "

" That may happen by and by," said Æthra. " Be patient, and we shall see. You are not yet big and strong enough to set out on such an errand. "

"And how soon shall I be strong enough?" Theseus persisted in enquiring.

"You are but a tiny boy as yet," replied his mother. "See if you can lift this rock on which we are sitting."

The little fellow had a great opinion of his own strength; so, grasping the rough rock, he tugged and toiled amain, and got himself quite out of breath without being able to stir the heavy stone. It seemed to be rooted into the ground. No wonder he could not move it, for it would have taken all the forces of a very strong man to lift it out of its earthy bed.

His mother stood looking on with a sad smile on her lips and in her eyes, to see the zealous and yet puny efforts of her little boy. She could not help being sorrowful at finding him already so impatient to begin his adventures in the world.

"You see how it is, my dear Theseus," said she, "You must possess far more strength than now, before I can trust you to go to Athens and tell King Ægeus that you are his son. But when you can lift this rock, and show me what is hidden beneath it, I promise you my permission to depart."

Often and often, after this did Theseus ask his mother whether it was yet time for him to go to Athens; and still his mother pointed to the rock, and told him that for years to come he would not be strong enough to move it. And again and again the rosy-cheeked and curly-headed boy would tug and strain at the huge mass of stone, striving, child as he was, to do what a giant could hardly have done without taking both of his great hands to the task. Meanwhile the rock seemed to be sinking farther and farther into the ground.

But, difficult as the matter looked, Theseus was now growing up to be such a vigorous youth that, in his own

opinion, the time would quickly come when he might hope to get the upper hand of this ponderous lump of stone.

"Mother, I do believe it has started!" cried he, after one of his attempts. "The earth around it is certainly a little cracked!"

"No, no, child!" his mother hastily answered. "It is not possible you can have moved it, such a boy as you still are!"

Nor would she be convinced, although Theseus showed her the place where he fancied that the stem of a flower had been partly uprooted by the movement of the rock. But Æthra sighed and looked disquieted; for, no doubt, she began to be conscious that her son was no longer a child, and that, in a little while, hence, she must send him forth to face the perils and troubles of the world.

Little more than a year afterwards, they were again sitting on the moss-covered stone. Æthra had once more told her son the oft-repeated story of his father, and how gladly he would receive Theseus at his stately palace, and how he would present him to his courtiers and the people, and tell them that here was the heir of his dominions. The eyes of Theseus glowed with enthusiasm, and he would hardly sit still to hear his mother speak.

"Dear mother Æthra," he exclaimed, "I never felt half so strong as now! I am no longer a child, nor a boy, nor a mere youth! I feel myself a man! It is now time to make one earnest trial to remove the stone."

"Ah, my dearest Theseus," replied his mother, "not yet! not yet!"

"Yes, Mother," said he resolutely, "the time has come"

Then Theseus bent himself in good earnest to the task, and strained every sinew with manly strength and resolution. He put his whole brave heart into the effort. He wrestled with the big and sluggish stone as if it had been a living enemy. He heaved, he lifted; he resolved now to succeed or else to perish there, and let the rock be his monument for ever! Æthra stood gazing at him, and clasped her hands, partly with a mother's pride, and partly with a mother's sorrow. The great rock stirred! Yes, it was raised slowly from the bedded moss and earth, uprooting the shrubs and flowers along with it, and was turned upon its side. Theseus had conquered!

While taking breath, he looked joyfully at his mother, and she smiled upon him through her tears.

"Yes, Theseus," she said, "the time has come, and you must stay no longer at my side. See what King Ægeus, your royal father, left for you beneath the stone, when he lifted it in his mighty arms and laid it on the spot whence you have now removed it."

Theseus looked, and saw that the rock had been placed over another slab of stone, containing a cavity within it, so that it somewhat resembled a roughly-made chest or coffer, of which the upper mass had served as the lid. Within the cavity lay a sword with a golden hilt, and a pair of sandals.

"That was your father's sword," said Æthra, "and those were his sandals. When he went to be king of Athens, he bade me treat you as child until you should prove yourself a man by lifting this heavy stone. That task being accomplished, you are to put on his sandals in order to follow in your father's footsteps, and to gird on his sword, so that you may fight giants and dragons as King Ægeus did in his youth."

"I will set out for Athens this very day!" cried Theseus.

But his mother persuaded him to stay a day or two longer, while she got ready some necessary articles for his journey.

I cannot stop to tell you any of the adventures that befell Theseus on the road to Athens.

By the time he reached his journey's end, Theseus had done many valiant feats with his father's golden hilted sword, and had gained the name of being one of the bravest young men of the day. His fame travelled faster than he did, and reached Athens before him.

He little suspected, innocent youth that he was, that here in this very Athens, where his father reigned, a greater danger awaited him, than any which he had encountered on the road. Yet this was the truth. You must understand that the father of Theseus, though not very old in years, was almost worn out with the cares of government, and had thus grown aged before his time. His nephews, not expecting him to live a very great while, intended to get all the power of the kingdom into their own hands. But when they heard that Theseus had arrived in Athens, and learned what a gallant young man he was, they saw that he would not be at all the kind of person to let them steal away his father's crown and sceptre, which ought to be his own by right of inheritance. Thus these bad-hearted nephews of King Ægeus, who were own cousins of Theseus, at once became his enemies. A still more dangerous enemy was Medea, the wicked enchantress; for she was now the king's wife, and wanted to give the kingdom to her son Medus, instead of letting it be given to the son of Æthra, whom she hated.

It so happened that the king's nephews met Theseus and found out who he was, just as he reached the,

entrance of the royal palace. With all their evil designs against him, they pretended to be their cousin's best friends, and expressed great joy at making his acquaintance. They proposed to him that he should come into the king's presence as a stranger, in order to try whether Ægeus would discover in the young man's features any likeness either to himself or his mother Æthra, and thus recognize him for a son. Theseus consented; for he fancied that his father would know him in a moment by the love that was in his heart. But while he waited at the door, the nephews ran and told King Ægeus that a young man had arrived in Athens, who, to their certain knowledge, intended to put him to death, and get possession of his royal crown.

"And he is now waiting for admission to your Majesty's presence," added they.

"Aha!" cried the old king on hearing this. "Why, he must be a very wicked young fellow indeed. Pray, what would you advise me to do with him?"

"Leave that to me, please your Majesty," Medea replied, "Only admit this evil-minded young man to your presence, treat him civilly, and invite him to drink a goblet of wine. Your Majesty is well aware that I sometimes amuse myself with distilling very powerful medicines. Here is one of them in this small phial. As to what it is made of, that is one of my secrets of state. Do but let me put a single drop into the goblet, and let the young man taste it, and I will answer for it he will quite lay aside the bad designs with which he comes hither."

As she said this, Medea smiled; but for all her smiling face, she meant nothing less than to poison the poor innocent Theseus before his father's eyes. And King Ægeus, like most other kings, thought any punishment mild enough for a person who was accused of plotting against his life.

He, therefore, made little or no objection to Medea's scheme and, as soon as the poisonous wine was ready, gave orders that the young stranger should be admitted into his presence. The goblet was set on table beside the King's throne, and a fly, meaning just to sip a little from the brim, immediately tumbled into it, and died. Observing this, Medea looked round at the nephews, and smiled again.

Advancing to the foot of the throne, Theseus attempted to make a little speech, which he had been thinking about as he came upstairs. But he was almost choked by a great many tender feelings that gushed out of his heart and swelled into his throat, all struggling to find utterance together. And, therefore, unless he could have laid his full, over-brimming heart in the king's hand, poor Theseus knew not what to do or say. The cunning Medea observed what was passing in the young man's mind.

"Does your Majesty see his confusion?" she whispered in the king's ear. "He is so conscious of guilt that he trembles and cannot speak. The wretch lives too long! Quick! offer him the wine."

Now King Ægeus had been gazing earnestly at the young stranger as he drew near the throne. There was something, he knew not what, either in his white brow, or in the fine expression of his mouth, or in his beautiful and tender eyes, that made him indistinctly feel as if he had seen this youth before; as if, indeed, he had dandled him on his knee when a baby, and had beheld him growing to be a stalwart man, while he himself grew old.

"Young man," said he, "you are welcome. I am proud to show hospitality to so heroic a youth. Do me the favour of drinking the contents of this goblet. It is brimming over, as you see, with delicious wine, such as I bestow only on those who are worthy of it. None is more worthy to quaff it than yourself."

So saying, King Ægeus took the golden goblet from the table, and was about to offer it to Theseus. But, partly through his infirmities, and partly because it seemed so sad a thing to take away this young man's life, however wicked he might be, and partly, no doubt, because his heart was wiser than his head, and quaked within him at the thought of what he was going to do—for all these reasons the king's hand trembled so much that a great deal of the wine slopped over. In order to strengthen his purpose, and fearing lest the whole of the precious poison should be wasted, one of his nephews now whispered to him :

"Has your Majesty any doubt of this stranger's guilt? There is the very sword with which he means to slay you. How sharp and bright, and terrible it is! Quick!—let him taste the wine: or perhaps he may do the deed even yet."

At these words Ægeus drove every thought and feeling out of the breast, except the one idea of how justly the young man deserved to be put to death. He sat erect on his throne, and held out the goblet of wine with a steady hand, and bent on Theseus a frown of kingly severity; for, after all, he had too noble a spirit to murder even a treacherous enemy with a deceitful smile upon his face.

"Drink!", said he, in the stern tone with which he was wont to condemn a criminal to be beheaded. "You have well deserved from me such wine as this!"

Theseus held out his hand to take the wine. But before he touched it, King Ægeus trembled again. His eyes had fallen on the gold-hilted sword that hung at the young man's side. He drew back the goblet.

"That sword!" "he exclaimed; "How came you by it?"

"It was my father's sword," replied Theseus with a tremulous voice. "These were his sandals. My dear mother (her name is Æthra) told me his story while I was yet a little child. But it is only a month since I grew strong enough to lift the heavy stone, and take the sword and sandals from beneath it, and come to Athens to seek my father."

"My son! my son!" cried King Ægeus, flinging away the fatal goblet, and tottering down from the throne to fall into the arms of Theseus. "Yes, these are Æthra's eyes. It is my son."

I have quite forgotten what became of the king's nephews. But when the wicked Medea saw this new turn of affairs, she hurried out of the room, and, going to her private chamber, lost no time in setting her enchantments at work. She stayed only long enough to take her son with her, and to steal the crown jewels, together with the king's best robes, and whatever other valuable things she could lay hands on; and, getting into her chariot, she whipped up the snakes that drew it, and ascended high over the city.

The king, hearing the hiss of the serpents, scrambled as fast as he could to the window, and bawled out to the abominable enchantress never to come back. The whole people of Athens, too, who had run out of doors to see this wonderful spectacle, set up a shout of joy at the prospect of getting rid of her. Medea, almost bursting with rage, uttered precisely the same hiss as one of her own snakes, only ten times more venomous and spiteful; and, glaring fiercely out of the side of the chariot, she shook her hands over the multitude below, as if she was scattering a million curses among them. In so doing, however, she unintentionally let fall about five hundred diamonds of the first water, together with a thousand great pearls, and two thousand emeralds, rubies, sapphires, opals, and topazes, to

which she had helped herself out of the king's strong-box. All these came pelting down, like a shower of many-coloured hailstones, upon the heads, of grown people and children, who forthwith gathered them up and carried them back the palace. But King Ægeus told them that they were welcome to the whole ; and to twice as many more, if he had had them, for the sake of his delight at finding his son, and losing the wicked Medea. And, indeed, if you had seen how hateful was her last look, as the flaming chariot flew upwards, you would not have wondered that both king and people should think her departure a good riddance.

And now Prince Theseus was taken into great favour by his royal father. The old king was never weary of having him sit beside him on his throne (which was quite wide enough for two) and of hearing him tell about his dear mother, and his childhood, and of his many boyish efforts to lift the ponderous stone. Theseus, however, was much too brave and active a young man to be willing to spend all his time in relating things which had already happened. His ambition was to perform other and more heroic deeds, which should be better worth telling in prose and verse.

One morning, when Prince Theseus awoke, he fancied that he must have had a very sorrowful dream, and that it was still running in his mind, even now that his eyes were open. For it appeared as if the air was full of a melancholy wail. He put on his clothes as quickly as he could, (not forgetting his sandals and gold-hilted sword), and, hastening to the king, enquired what it all meant.

"Alas ! my son," quoth King Ægeus, heaving a long sigh, "here is a very lamentable matter in hand ! This is the most woeful anniversary in the whole year. It is the day when we annually draw lots to see which of the youths

and maidens of Athens shall go to be devoured by the horrible Minotaur ”.

“ The Minotaur ! ” exclaimed Prince Theseus ; and, like a brave young prince as he was, he put his hand to the hilt of the sword. “ What kind of a monster may that be ? Is it not possible, at the risk of one’s life, to slay him ? ”

But King Ægeus shook his venerable hand, and, to convince Theseus that it was quite a hopeless case, he gave him an explanation of the whole affair. It seems that in the island of Crete there lived a certain dreadful monster called a Minotaur, which was shaped partly like a man and partly like a bull, and was altogether such a hideous sort of a creature that is really too disagreeable to think of him. If he were suffered to exist at all, it should have been on some desert island, or in the duskiness of some deep cavern, where nobody would ever be tormented by his abominable aspect. But King Minos, who reigned over Crete, laid out a vast deal of money in building a habitation for the Minotaur, and took great care of his health and comfort, merely for mischief’s sake. A few years before this time there had been a war between the City of Athens and the island of Crete, in which the Athenians were beaten and compelled to beg for peace. No peace could they obtain, however, except on condition that they should send seven young men and seven maidens every year to be devoured by the pet monster of the cruel King Minos. For three years this grievous calamity had been borne. And the sobs, and groans, and shrieks with which the city was now filled were caused by the people’s woe, because the fatal day had come again when the fourteen victims were to be chosen by lot ; and the old people feared lest their sons or daughters might be taken, and the youths and damsels dreaded lest they themselves might be destined to glut the ravenous maw of that detestable man-brute.

But when Theseus heard the story, he straightened himself up, so that he seemed taller than ever before ; and as for his face, it was indignant, spiteful, bold, tender, and compassionate, all in one look.

" Let the people of Athens this year draw lots for only six young men instead of seven," said he. " I will myself be the seventh, and let the Minotaur devour me if he can."

" O my dear son," cried King Ægeus, " why should you expose yourself to this horrible fate ? You are a royal prince, and have a right to hold yourself above the destinies of common men."

" It is because I am a prince, your son, and the rightful heir of your kingdom that I freely take upon me the calamity of your subjects," answered Theseus. " And you, my Father, being king over this people, and answerable to Heaven for their welfare, are bound to sacrifice what is dearest to you, rather than that the son or daughter of the poorest citizen should come to any harm."

The old king shed tears, and besought Theseus not to leave him desolate in his old age, more especially as he had but just begun to know the happiness of possessing a good and valiant son. Theseus, however, felt that he was in the right, and therefore would not give up his resolution. But he assured his father that he did not intend to be eaten up unresistingly, like a sheep and that if the Minotaur devoured him, it should not be without a battle for his dinner. And finally, since he could not help it, King Ægeus consented to let him go. So a vessel was got ready and rigged with black sails, and Theseus, with six other young men and seven tender and beautiful damsels, came down to the harbour to embark. A sorrowful multitude accompanied them to the shore. There was the poor old king, too, leaning on his son's arm, and looking as if his single heart held all the grief of Athens.

Just as Prince Theseus was going on board, his father bethought himself of one last word to say.

"My beloved son", said he, grasping the prince's hand, "you observe that the sails of this vessel are black, as indeed they ought to be, since it goes upon a voyage of sorrow and despair. Now, being weighed down with infirmities, I know not whether I can survive till the vessel shall return. But as long as I do live, I shall creep daily to the top of yonder cliff to watch if there be a sail upon the sea. And, dearest Theseus, if by some happy chance you should escape the jaws of the Minotaur, then tear down those dismal sails, and hoist others that shall be bright as the sunshine. Beholding them on the horizon, myself and all the people will know that you are coming back victorious, and will welcome you with such a festal uproar as Athens never heard before."

Theseus promised that he would do so. Then, going on board, the mariners trimmed the vessel's black sails to the wind, which blew faintly off the shore, being pretty much made up of the sighs that everybody kept pouring forth on this melancholy occasion. But, by and by, when they had got fairly out to sea, there came a stiff breeze from the north-west, and drove them along as merrily over the white-capped waves as if they had been going on the most delightful errand imaginable. And though it was a sad business enough, I rather question whether fourteen young people without any old person to keep them in order, could continue to spend the whole time of the voyage in being miserable. There had been some few dances upon the undulating deck, I suspect and some hearty bursts of laughter, and other such unreasonable merriment among the victims, before the high, blue mountains of Crete began to show themselves among the far-off clouds. That sight, to be sure, made them all grave again.

Theseus stood among the sailors, gazing eagerly towards the land, although as yet it seemed hardly more substantial than the clouds amidst which the mountains were looming up. Once or twice he fancied that he saw a gleam of some bright object a long way off, flinging a gleam across the waves.

"Did you see that flash of light?" he enquired of the master of the vessel.

"No, prince; but I have seen it before", answered the master, "it came from Talus, I suppose".

As the breeze came fresher just then, the master was busy with trimming his sails, and had no more time to answer questions. But while the vessel flew faster and faster towards Crete, Theseus was astonished to behold a human figure, gigantic in size, which appeared to be striding with a measured movement along the margin of the island. It stepped from cliff to cliff, and sometimes from one headland to another, while the sea foamed and thundered on the shore beneath, and dashed its jets of spray over the giant's feet. What was still more remarkable, whenever the sun shone on this huge figure, it flickered and glimmered; its vast countenance, too, had a metallic lustre, and threw great flashes of splendour through the air. The folds of its garments, moreover, instead of waving in the wind, fell heavily over its limbs, as if woven of some kind of metal.

The nearer the vessel came, the more Theseus wondered what this immense giant could be, and whether it actually had life or no. For though it walked, and made other lifelike motions, there yet was a kind of jerk in its gait which, together with its brazen aspect, caused the young prince to suspect that it was no true giant, but only a wonderful piece of machinery. The figure looked all the more terrible, because it carried an enormous brass club on its shoulder.

"What is this wonder?" Theseus asked of the master of the vessel, who was now at leisure to answer him.

"It is Talus, the Man of Brass," said the master.

"And is he a live giant or a brazen image?" asked Theseus.

"That, truly," replied the master, "is the point which has always perplexed me. Some say, indeed, that this Talus was hammered out for King Minos by Vulcan himself, the most skilful of all workers in metal. But who ever saw a brazen image that had sense enough to walk round an island three times a day, as this giant walks round the island of Crete, challenging every vessel that comes nigh the shore? And, on the other hand, what living thing, unless his sinews were made of brass, would not be weary of marching eighteen hundred miles in the twenty-four hours, as Talus does, without ever sitting down to rest: he is a puzzle, take him how you will!"

Still the vessel went bounding onward; and now Theseus could hear the brazen clangour of the giant's footsteps as he trod heavily upon the sea-beaten rocks, some of which were seen to crack and crumble into the foamy waves beneath his weight. As they approached the entrance of the port, the giant straddled clear across it, with a foot firmly planted on each headland, and, uplifting his club to such a height that its butt-end was hidden in a cloud, he stood in that formidable posture, with the sun gleaming all over his metallic surface. There seemed nothing else to be expected but that the next moment he would fetch his great club down, slam-bang, and smash the vessel into a thousand pieces, without heeding how many innocent people he might destroy; for there is seldom any mercy in a giant, you know, and quite as little in a piece of brass clock-work. But just when Theseus and his companions thought the blow was coming, the brazen lips unclosed themselves, and the figure spoke.

"Whence come you, strangers?"

And when the ringing voice ceased, there was just such a reverberation as you may have heard within a great church bell for a moment or two after the stroke of its hammer.

"From Athens!" shouted the master in reply.

"On what errand?" thundered the Man of Brass.

And he whirled his club aloft more threateningly than ever, as if he were about to smite them with a thunder-stroke right amidships, because Athens, so little while ago, had been at war with Crete.

"We bring the seven youths and seven maidens," answered the master, "to be devoured by the Minotaur."

"Pass!" cried the brazen giant.

That one loud word rolled all about the sky, while again there was a booming reverberation within the figure's breast. The vessel glided between the headlands of the port, and the giant resumed his march. In a few moments this wondrous sentinel was far away, flashing in the distant sunshine, and revolving with immense strides around the island of Crete, as it was his never-ceasing task to do.

No sooner had they entered the harbour than a party of the guards of King Minos came down to the water-side and took charge of the fourteen young men and damsels. Surrounded by these armed warriors, Prince Theseus and his companions were led to the king's palace and ushered into his presence. Now Minos was a stern and pitiless king. If the figure that guarded Crete was made of brass, then the monarch who ruled over it, might be thought to have a still harder metal in his breast, and might have been made a man of iron. He bent his shaggy brows upon the poor Athenian victims. Any other mortal, beholding their fresh and tender beauty and their innocent

looks, would have felt himself sitting on thorns until he had made every soul of them happy by bidding them go free as the summer wind. But this unrelenting Minos cared only to examine whether they were plump enough to satisfy the Minotaur's appetite. For my part, I wish he himself had been the only victim, and then the monster would have found him a pretty tough one.

One after another, King Minos called these pale, frightened youths and sobbing maidens to his footstool, gave each of them a poke in the ribs with his sceptre (to try whether they were in good flesh or no), and dismissed them with a nod to his guards. But when his eyes rested on Theseus, the king looked at him more attentively, because his face was calm and brave.

"Young man," asked he with his stern voice, "are you not appalled at the certainty of being devoured by this terrible Minotaur?"

"I have offered my life in a good cause," answered Theseus, "and therefore I give it freely and gladly. But thou, King Minos, art thou not thyself appalled, who year after year hast perpetrated this dreadful wrong, by giving seven innocent youths and as many maidens to be devoured by a monster? Dost thou not tremble, wicked king, to turn thine eyes inward on thine own heart? Sitting there on thy golden throne, and in thy robes of majesty, I tell thee to thy face, King Minos, thou art a more hideous monster than the Minotaur himself!"

"Aha! do you think me so?" cried the king, laughing in his cruel way. "Tomorrow at breakfast-time you shall have an opportunity of judging which is the greater monster, the Minotaur or the king. Take them away, guards; and let this free-spoken youth be the Minotaur's first morsel!"

Near the king's throne, (though I had no time to tell you so before), stood his daughter Ariadne. She was a beautiful and tender-hearted maiden, and looked at these poor doomed captives with very different feelings from those of the iron-breasted King Minos. She really wept, indeed, at the idea of how much human happiness would be needlessly thrown away by giving so many young people, in the first bloom of their lives, to be eaten up by a creature, who, no doubt, would have preferred a fat ox, or even a large pig, to the plumpest of them. And when she beheld the brave, spirited figure of Prince Theseus, bearing himself so calmly in his terrible peril, she grew a hundred times more pitiful than before. As the guards were taking him away, she flung herself at the king's feet, and besought him to set all the captives free, and especially this one young man.

"Peace, foolish girl!" answered King Minos. "What hast thou to do with an affair like this? It is a matter of state policy, and therefore quite beyond thy weak comprehension. Go, water thy flowers, and think no more of these Athenian caitiffs, whom the Minotaur shall as certainly eat up for breakfast as I shall eat a partridge for my supper."

So saying, the king looked cruel enough to devour Theseus and all the rest of the captives himself, had there been no Minotaur to save him the trouble. As he would hear not another word in their favour, the prisoners were now led away, and clapped into a dungeon, where the jailer advised them to get to sleep as soon as possible, because the Minotaur was in the habit of calling for breakfast early. The seven maidens and six of the young men soon sobbed themselves to slumber. But Theseus was not like them. He felt conscious that he was wiser, braver, and stronger than his companions, and that, therefore, he had the responsibility of all their lives upon him, and must

consider whether there was no way to save them, even in this last extremity. So he kept himself awake, and paced to and fro across the gloomy dungeon in which they were shut up.

Just before midnight the door was softly unbarred, and the gentle Ariadne showed herself, with a torch in her hand.

"Are you awake, Prince Theseus?" she whispered.

"Yes," answered Theseus. "With so little time to live I do not choose to waste any of it in sleep."

"Then follow me," said Ariadne, "and tread softly."

What had become of the jailer and the guards Theseus never knew. But, however that might be, Ariadne opened all the doors, and let him forth from the darksome prison into the pleasant moonlight.

"Theseus," said the maiden, "you can now get on board your vessel and sail away for Athens."

"No," answered the young man, "I will never leave Crete unless I can first slay the Minotaur, and save my poor companions and deliver Athens from this cruel tribute."

"I knew that this would be your resolution," said Ariadne. "Come then with me, brave Theseus. Here is your own sword, of which the guards deprived you. You will need it; and pray Heaven you may use it well."

Then she led Theseus along by the hand, until they came to a dark, shadowy grove, where the moonlight wasted itself on the top of the trees, without shedding so much as a flickering beam upon their pathway. After going a good way through this dark place, they reached a high marble wall, which was overgrown with creeping plants, that made it shaggy with their verdure. The wall

seemed to have no door, nor any windows, but rose up, lofty and massive and mysterious, and was neither to be clambered over, nor, so far as Theseus could perceive, to be passed through. Nevertheless, Ariadne did but press one of her soft little fingers against a particular block of marble, and though it looked as solid as any other part of the wall, it yielded to her touch, disclosing an entrance just wide enough to admit them. They crept through, and the marble stone swung back into its place.

"We are now," said Ariadne, "in the famous labyrinth which Daedalus built before he made himself a pair of wings, and flew away from our island like a bird. That Daedalus was a very cunning workman; but of all his artful contrivances, this labyrinth is the most wondrous. Were we to take but a few steps from the doorway, we might wander about all our lifetime, and never find it again. Yet in the very centre of this labyrinth is the Minotaur; and Theseus, you must go thither to seek him".

"But how shall I ever find him," asked Theseus, "if the labyrinth so bewilders me as you say it will?"

Just as he spoke, they heard a rough and very disagreeable roar, which greatly resembled the lowing of a fierce bull, but yet had some sort of sound like the human voice.

"That is the Minotaur's roar," whispered Ariadne, closely grasping the hand of Theseus, and pressing one of her own hands to her heart, which was all in a tremble. "You must follow that sound through the windings of the labyrinth, and, by and by, you will find him. Stay! take the end of this silken string; I will hold the other end, and then, if you win the victory, it will lead you again to this spot. Farewell, brave Theseus!"

So the young man took the end of the silken string in his left hand, and his gold-hilted sword, ready drawn from

its scabbard, in the other, and trod boldly into the mysterious labyrinth. How this labyrinth was built is more than I can tell you. But so cunningly contrived a maze was never seen in the world, before, nor since. There can be nothing else so intricate, unless it were the brain of a man like Daedalus, who planned it, or the heart of any ordinary man, which last, to be sure, is ten times as great a mystery as the labyrinth of Crete. Theseus had not taken five steps before he lost sight of Ariadne; and, in five more, his head was growing dizzy. But still he went on, now creeping through a low arch, now ascending a flight of steps, now in one crooked passage, and now in another, with here a door opening before him, and there one banging behind, until it really seemed as if the walls spun round, and whirled him round along with them.

As he passed onward, the clouds gathered over the moon, and the labyrinth grew so dusky that Theseus could no longer discern the maze through which he was passing. He would have felt quite lost, and utterly hopeless of ever again walking in a straight path, if, every little while, he had not been conscious of a gentle twitch at the silken cord. Then he knew that the tender-hearted Ariadne was still holding the other end, and that she was fearing for him, and hoping for him, and giving him just as much of her sympathy as if she was close by his side. Oh, indeed, I can assure you there was a vast deal of human sympathy, running along that slender thread of silk! But still he followed the dreadful roar of the Minotaur, which now grew louder and louder, and finally so very loud that Theseus fully expected to come close upon him at every new zigzag and wriggle of the path. And at last in an open space at the very centre of the labyrinth, he did discern the hideous creature.

Without one word on either side, there ensued the most awful fight between Theseus and the Minotaur that ever

happened on this earth. I really know not how it might have turned out, if the monster, in his first headlong rush against Theseus, had not missed him by a hair's breadth, and broken one of his horns off against the stone wall. On this mishap he bellowed so intolerably that a part of the labyrinth tumbled down, and all the inhabitants of Crete mistook the noise for an uncommonly heavy thunderstorm. Smarting with the pain, he galloped around the open space in so ridiculous a way that Theseus laughed at it long afterwards, though not precisely at that moment. After this, the two antagonists stood valiantly up to one another, and fought for a long while. At last the Minotaur made a run at Theseus, grazed his left side with his horn, and flung him down; and, thinking that he had stabbed him to the heart, he cut a great caper in the air, opened his huge mouth from ear to ear and prepared to snap his head off. But Theseus by this time had leaped up, and caught the monster off his guard. Fetching a sword-stroke at him with all his force, he hit him fair upon the neck, and made his bull head skip six yards from his human body, which fell down flat upon the ground.

So now the battle was ended. Immediately the moon shone out as brightly as if all the troubles of the world, and all the wickedness and ugliness that infest human life, were past and gone for ever. And Theseus, as he leaned on his sword taking breath, felt another twitch of the silken cord; for all through the terrible encounter, he had held it fast in his left hand. Eager to let Ariadne know of his success, he followed the guidance of the thread, and soon found himself at the entrance of the labyrinth.

"Thou hast slain the monster?" cried Ariadne, clasping her hands.

"Thanks to thee, dear Ariadne," answered Theseus, "I return victorious."

"Then", said Ariadne, "we must quickly summon thy friends, and get them and thyself on board the vessel before dawn. If morning finds thee here, my father will avenge the Minotaur."

To make my story short, the poor captives were awakened, and, hardly knowing whether it was not a joyful dream, were told of what Theseus had done, and that they must set sail for Athens before daybreak. Hastening down to the vessel, they all clambered on board, except Prince Theseus, who lingered behind them on the stand, holding Ariadne's hand clasped in his own.

"Dear maiden," said he, "thou wilt surely go with us. Thou art too gentle and sweet a child for such an iron-hearted father as King Minos. He cares no more for thee than a granite rock cares for the little flower that grows in one of its crevices. But my father, King Ægeus, and my dear mother Æthra, and all the fathers and mothers in Athens, and all the sons and daughters, too will love and honour thee as their benefactress. Come with us then, for King Minos will be very angry when he knows what thou hast done."

"No, Theseus," the maiden said, pressing his hand, and then drawing back a step or two, "I cannot go with you. My father is old, and has nobody but myself to love him. Hard as you think his heart is, it would break to lose me. At first King Minos will be angry, but he will soon forgive his only child; and by and by he will rejoice, I know, that no more youths and maidens must come from Athens to be devoured by the Minotaur. I have saved you, Theseus, as much for my father's sake as for your own. Farewell! Heaven bless you!"

All this was done so true and so maiden-like, and was spoken with so sweet a dignity, that Theseus would have blushed to urge her any longer. Nothing remained for him,

therefore, but to bid Ariadne an affectionate farewell, and to go on board the vessel and set sail.

In a few moments the white foam was boiling up before their prow, as Prince Theseus and his companions sailed out of the harbour with a whistling breeze behind them. Talus, the brazen giant, on his never-ceasing sentinel's march, happened to be approaching that part of the coast, and they saw him by the glimmering of the moonbeams on his polished surface, while he was yet a great way off. As the figure moved like clock-work, however, and could neither hasten his enormous strides nor retard them, he arrived at the port when they were just beyond the reach of his club. Nevertheless, straddling from headland to headland, as his custom was, Talus attempted to strike a blow at the vessel, and, overreaching himself, tumbled at full length into the sea, which splashed high over his gigantic shape as when an iceberg turns a somersault. There he lies to this day.

On this homeward voyage the fourteen youths and damsels were in excellent spirits, as you will easily suppose. They spent most of their time in dancing, except when the sidelong breeze made the deck slope too much. In due season they came within sight of the coast of Attica, which was their native country. But here, I am grieved to tell you, happened a sad misfortune.

You will remember (what Theseus unfortunately forgot) that his father, King Ægeus, had enjoined him to hoist sunshine sails, instead of black ones, in case he should overcome the Minotaur and return victorious. In the joy of their success, however, and amidst the sports, dancing, and other merriment with which these young folks wore away the time, they never once thought whether their sails were black, white, or rainbow coloured, and, indeed, left it entirely to the mariners whether they had any sails at all. Thus the vessel returned like a raven, with the same sable

wings that had wafted her away. But poor King Ægeus, day after day, infirm as he was, had clambered to the summit of a cliff that overhung the sea, and there sat watching for Prince Theseus, homeward bound; and no sooner did he behold the fatal blackness of the sails than he concluded that his dear son, whom he loved so much and felt so proud of, had been eaten by the Minotaur. He could not bear the thought of living any longer; so first flinging his crown and sceptre into the sea, King Ægeus merely stooped forward and fell headlong over the cliff, and was drowned, in the waves that foamed at its base!

This was melancholy news for Prince Theseus, who, when he stepped ashore, found himself king of all the country, whether he would or no; and such a turn of fortune was enough to make any young man feel very much out of spirits. However, he sent for his dear mother to Athens, and, by taking her advice in matters of state, became a very excellent monarch, and was greatly beloved by his people.

21. CIRCE THE ENCHANTRESS

In the course of his weary voyages, Ulysses arrived at an island that looked very green and pleasant, but the name of which was unknown to him. For, only a little while before, he came thither, he had met with a terrible hurricane, or rather a great many hurricanes at once, which drove his fleet of vessels into a strange part of the sea, where neither himself nor any of his mariners had ever sailed. This misfortune was entirely owing to the foolish curiosity of his comrades, who, while Ulysses lay asleep, had untied some very bulky leather bags, in which they supposed a valuable treasure to be concealed. But in each of these stout bags, King Æolus, the ruler of the winds, had tied up a tempest,

and had given it to Ulysses to keep, in order that he might be sure of a favourable passage homeward to Ithaca; and when the strings were loosened, forth rushed the whistling blasts, like air out of a burst bladder, whitening the sea with foam, and scattering the vessels nobody could tell whither.

Immediately after escaping from this peril, a still greater one had befallen him. Scudding before the hurricane, he reached a place which, as he afterwards found, was called Laestrygonia, where some monstrous giants had eaten up many of his companions, and had sunk every one of his vessels except that in which he himself sailed, by flinging great masses of rock at them from the cliff along the shore. After going through such troubles as these, you cannot wonder that King Ulysses was glad to moor his tempest-beaten bark in a quiet cove of the green island which seemed so calm and peaceful. But he had encountered so many dangers from giants, and one-eyed Cyclops, and other monsters of the sea and land, that he could not help dreading some mischief, even in this pleasant and seemingly solitary spot. For two days, therefore, the poor weather-worn voyagers kept quiet, and either stayed on board their vessel, or merely crept along under the cliffs that bordered the shore; and, to keep themselves alive, they dug shell-fish out of the sand, and sought for any little rill of fresh water that might be running towards the sea.

King Ulysses was a bold man as well as a prudent one; and, on the third morning, he determined to discover what sort of a place the island was, and whether it was possible to obtain a supply of food for the hungry mouths of his companions. So, taking a spear in his hand, he clambered to the summit of a cliff, and gazed round about him. At a distance, towards the centre of the island, he beheld the stately towers of what seemed to be a palace, built of snow-white marble, and rising in the midst of a grove of lofty

trees. The thick branches of these trees stretched across the front of the edifice, and more than half-concealed it, although, from the portion which he saw, Ulysses judged it to be spacious and exceedingly beautiful, and probably the residence of some great nobleman or prince. A blue smoke went curling up from the chimney, and was almost the most pleasant part of the spectacle to Ulysses; for, from the abundance of this smoke, it was reasonable to conclude that there was a good fire in the kitchen, and that at dinner-time a plentiful banquet would be served up to the inhabitants of the palace, and to whatever guests might happen to drop in.

With so agreeable a prospect before him, Ulysses fancied that he could not do better than to go straight to the palace gate, and tell the master of it that there was a crew of poor shipwrecked mariners not far off, who had eaten nothing for a day or two, save a few shell-fish, and would therefore be thankful for a little food. And the prince or nobleman must be a very stingy person, to be sure, if at least when his own dinner was over, he would not bid them welcome to the broken victuals from the table.

Flattering himself with this idea, King Ulysses had made a few steps in the direction of the palace, when there was a great twittering and chirping from the branches of a neighbouring tree. A moment afterwards, a bird came flying towards him, and hovered in the air, so as almost to brush his face with its wings. It was a very pretty little bird, with purple wings and body, and yellow legs, and a circle of golden feathers round its neck, and on its head a golden tuft, which looked like a king's crown in miniature. Ulysses tried to catch the bird, but it fluttered nimbly out of his reach, still chirping in a piteous tone, as if it could have told a lamentable story had it only been gifted with human language. And when he attempted to

drive it away, the bird flew no farther than the bough of the next tree, and again came fluttering about his head, with its doleful chirp, as soon as he showed a purpose of going forward.

"Have you anything to tell me, little bird?" asked Ulysses. And he was ready to listen attentively to whatever the bird might communicate; for, at the siege of Troy and elsewhere, he had known such odd things to happen that he would not have considered it much out of the common run, had this little feathered creature talked as plainly as himself.

"Peep!" said the bird, "peep, peep, pe-weep!" And nothing else would it say, but only "Peep, peep, pe-weep!" in a melancholy cadence, and over and over again. As often as Ulysses moved forward, however, the bird showed the greatest alarm, and did its best to drive him back, with the anxious flutter of its purple wings. Its unaccountable behaviour made him conclude, at last, that the bird knew of some danger that awaited him, and which must needs be very terrible, beyond all question, since it moved even a little fowl to feel compassion for a human being. So he resolved, for the present, to return to the vessel, and tell his companions what he had seen.

This appeared to satisfy the bird. As soon as Ulysses turned back, it ran up the trunk of a tree, and began to pick insects out of the bark with its long, sharp bill; for it was a kind of woodpecker, you must know, and had to get its living in the same manner as other birds of that species. But every little while, as it pecked at the bark of the tree, the purple bird bethought itself of some secret sorrow, and repeated its plaintive note of "Peep, peep, pe-weep!"

On his way to the shore, Ulysses had the good luck to kill a large stag, by thrusting his spear into its back

and took it back to his followers who rejoiced to see such a succulent meal before them. The rest of the day was spent in feasting, and when these enormous eaters got up from the table at sunset it was only because they could not scrape another morsel off the poor animal's bones.

The next morning their appetites were as sharp as ever. They looked at Ulysses as if they expected him to clamber up the cliff again, and come back with another fat deer upon his shoulders. Instead of setting out, however, he summoned the whole crew together, and told them it was in vain to hope that he could kill a stag every day for their dinner, and therefore it was advisable to think of some other mode of satisfying their hunger.

"Now, said he," when I was on the cliff yesterday, I discovered that this island is inhabited. At a considerable distance from the shore stood a marble palace, which appeared to be a very spacious building and had a great deal of smoke curling out of one of its chimneys."

"Aha!" muttered some of his companions, smacking their lips. "That smoke must have come from the kitchen fire. There was a good dinner on the spit; and no doubt there will be as good a one to-day."

"But," continued the wise Ulysses, "you must remember my good friends, our misadventure in the cavern of one-eyed Polyphemus, the Cyclops! There, instead of his ordinary milk diet, did he not eat up two of our comrades for his supper, and a couple more for breakfast, and two at his supper again? Methinks I see him yet, the hideous monster, scanning us with that great red eye in the middle of his forehead to single out the fattest. And then again only a few days ago, did we not fall into the hands of the king of the Laestrygons, and those other horrible giants, his subjects, who devoured a great many more of us than are now left? To tell you the truth, if we go to yonder palace, there can be no question that we shall make our

appearance at the dinner-table; but whether seated as guests, or served up as a food, is a point to be seriously considered.

"Either way," murmured some of the hungriest of the crew, "it will be better than starvation particularly if one could be sure of being well fattened beforehand, and daintily cooked afterwards."

"That is a matter of taste," said King Ulysses, "and, for my own part, neither the most careful fattening nor the daintiest of cookery would reconcile me to being dished at last. My proposal is, therefore, that we divide ourselves into two equal parties, and ascertain, by drawing lots, which of the two shall go to the palace and beg for food and assistance. If these can be obtained, all is well. If not, and if the inhabitants prove as inhospitable as Polyphemus, or the Laestrygons, then there will but half of us perish, and the remainder may set sail and escape."

As nobody objected to this scheme, Ulysses proceeded to count the whole band, and found that there were forty-six men, including himself. He then numbered off twenty-two of them, and put Eurylochus (who was one of his chief officers, and second only to himself in sagacity) at their head. Ulysses took command of the remaining twenty-two men in person. Then taking off his helmet, he put two shells into it, on one of which was written "Go" and on the other "Stay". Another person now held the helmet, while Ulysses and Eurylochus drew out each a shell; and the word "Go" was found written on that which Eurylochus had drawn. In this manner it was decided that Ulysses and his twenty-two men were to remain at the sea-side until the other party should have found out what sort of treatment they might expect at the mysterious palace. As there was no help for it, Eurylochus immediately set forth at the head of his twenty-two

followers, who went off in a very melancholy state of mind, leaving their friends in hardly better spirits than themselves.

No sooner had they clambered up the cliff than they discerned the marble towers of the palace, ascending, as white as snow, out of the lovely green shadow of the trees which surrounded it. A gush of smoke came from a chimney in the rear of the edifice. This vapour rose high in the air, and, meeting with the breeze, was wafted seaward, and made to pass over the heads of the hungry mariners. When people's appetites are keen, they have a very quick scent for anything savoury in the wind.

Scarcely had they gone half a dozen steps from the edge of the cliff than a bird came fluttering to meet them. It was the same pretty little bird, with the purple wings and body, the yellow legs, the golden collar round its neck, and the crown-like tuft upon its head, whose behaviour had so much surprised Ulysses. It hovered about Eurylochus, and almost brushed his face with its wings.

"Peep, peep, pe-weep!" chirped the bird.

So plaintively intelligent was the sound that it seemed as if the little creature were going to break its heart with some mighty secret that it had to tell, and only this one poor note to tell it with.

"My pretty bird," said Eurylochus, for he was a wary person, and let no token of harm escape his notice, "my pretty bird, who sent you hither? And what is the message which you bring?"

"Peep, peep, pe-weep!" replied the bird very sorrowfully. Then it flew towards the edge of the cliff and looked round of them as if exceedingly anxious that they should return whence they came. Eurylochus and a few of the others were inclined to turn back. They could not

help suspecting that the purple bird must be aware of something mischievous that would befall them at the palace, and the knowledge of which affected its airy spirit with a human sympathy and sorrow. But the rest of the voyagers, snuffing up the smoke from the palace kitchen, ridiculed the idea of returning to the vessel.

At last the purple bird flew away, crying "Peep, peep, pe-weep!" more dolorously than ever.

"That bird," remarked Eurylochus, "knows more than we do about what awaits us at the palace."

"Come on, then" cried his comrades, "and we'll soon know as much as he does."

The party, accordingly, travelled onward through the green and pleasant wood. Every little while they caught fresh glimpses of the marble palace, which looked more and more beautiful the nearer they approached it.

So they hastened their steps towards the portal but had not got half-way across the wide lawn when a pack of lions, tigers and wolves came bounding to meet them. The terrified mariners started back, expecting no better fate than to be torn to pieces and devoured. To their surprise and joy, however, these wild beasts merely capered around them, wagging their tails, offering their heads to be stroked and patted, and behaving just like so many well-bred house-dogs when they wish to express their delight at meeting their masters, or their master's friends. The biggest lion licked the feet of Eurylochus, and every other lion, and every wolf and tiger, singled out one of his two and twenty followers, whom the beast fondled as if he loved him better than a beef-bone.

But, for all that, Eurylochus imagined that he saw something fierce and savage in their eyes; nor would he have been surprised at any moment to feel the big lion's terrible

claws, or to see each of the tigers make a deadly spring, or each wolf leap at the throat of the man whom he had fondled. Their mildness seemed unreal, and a mere freak; but their savage nature was as true as their teeth and claws.

Nevertheless, the men went safely across the lawn, with the wild beasts frisking about them, and doing no manner of harm; although, as they mounted the steps of the palace, you might possibly have heard a low growl, particularly from the wolves, as if they thought it a pity, after all, to let the strangers pass, without so much as tasting what they were made of.

Eurylochos and his followers now passed under a lofty portal and looked through the open doorway into the interior of the palace. The first thing that they saw was a spacious hall, and a fountain in the middle of it, gushing up towards the ceiling out of a marble basin, and falling back into it with a continual plash. The water of this fountain, as it spouted upwards, was constantly taking new shapes, not very distinctly, but plainly enough for a nimble fancy to recognize what they were. Now, it was the shape of a man in a long robe, the fleecy whiteness of which was made out of the fountain's spray; now it was a lion, or a tiger, or a wolf, or an ass, or, as often as anything else, a hog wallowing in the marble basin as if it were his sty. It was either magic or some very curious machinery that caused the gushing water-spout to assume all these forms. But before the strangers had time to look closely at this wonderful sight, their attention was drawn off by a very sweet and agreeable sound. A woman's voice was singing melodiously in another room of the palace, and with her voice was mingled the noise of a loom, at which she was probably seated, weaving a rich texture of cloth, and intertwining the high and low sweetness of her voice into a rich tissue of harmony.

By and by the song came to an end, and then, all at once, there were several feminine voices talking airily and cheerfully, with now and then a merry burst of laughter, such as you may always hear when three or four young women sit at work together.

"What a sweet song that was!" exclaimed one of the voyagers

"Too sweet, indeed," answered Eurylochus, shaking his head. "Yet it was not so sweet as the song of the Sirens, those bird-like damsels who wanted to tempt us on the rocks, so that our vessel might be wrecked and our bones left whitening along the shore"

No warning or persuasion, however, had any effect on his companions. They went up to a pair of folding-doors at the farther end of the hall, and, throwing them wide open, passed into the next room. Eurylochus meanwhile had stepped behind a pillar. In the short moment in which the folding-doors opened and closed again, he caught a glimpse of a very beautiful woman rising from the loom, and coming to meet the poor, weather-beaten wanderers, with a hospitable smile, and her hand stretched out in welcome. There were four other young women, who joined their hands and danced merrily forward, making gesture of obeisance to the strangers. They were only less beautiful than the lady who seemed to be their mistress. Yet Eurylochus fancied that one of them had sea-green hair, and that the close-fitting bodice of a second looked like the bark of a tree, and that both the others had something odd in their aspect, although he could not quite determine what it was in the little while that he had to examine them.

The folding-doors swung quickly back and left him standing behind the pillar, in the solitude of the outer hall. There Eurylochus waited until he was quite weary, and

listened eagerly to every sound, but without hearing anything that could help him to guess what had become of his friends. Footsteps, it is true, seemed to be passing and repassing in other parts of the palace. Then there was a clatter of silver dishes, or golden ones, which made him imagine a rich feast in a splendid banqueting-hall. But by and by he heard a tremendous grunting and squealing, and then a sudden scampering, like that of small, hard hoofs over a marble floor, while the voices of the mistress and her four handmaidens were screaming all together in tones of anger and derision. Eurylochus could not conceive what had happened, unless a drove of swine had broken into the palace, attracted by the smell of the feast. Chancing to cast his eyes at the fountain, he saw that it did not shift its shape, as formerly, nor looked either like a long-robed man, or a lion, a tiger, a wolf, or an ass. It looked like nothing but a hog, which lay wallowing in the marble basin, and filled it from brim to brim.

But we must leave the prudent Eurylochus waiting in the outer hall, and follow his friends into the inner secrecy of the palace. As soon as the beautiful woman saw them, she arose from the loom, as I have told you, and came forward, smiling and stretching out her hand. She took the hand of the foremost among them, and bade him and the whole party welcome.

"You have been long expected, my good friends," said she. "I desire to make you happy for as long as a time as you may remain with me. For this purpose, my honoured guests, I have ordered a banquet to be prepared. Fish, fowl, and flesh, roasted and in luscious stews, and seasoned, I trust, to all your tastes, are ready to be served up. If your appetites tell you it is dinner-time, then come with me to the festal saloon."

The beautiful woman now clapped her hands, and immediately there entered a train of two-and-twenty serving-

men, bringing dishes of the richest food, all hot from the kitchen-fire, and sending up such a steam that it hung like a cloud below the crystal dome of the saloon. An equal number of attendants brought great flagons of wine of various kinds, some of which sparkled as it was poured out, and went bubbling down the throat; while of other sorts the purple liquor was so clear that you could see the wrought figures at the bottom of the goblet. While the servants supplied the two-and-twenty guests with food and drink, the hostess and her four maidens went from one to another, exhorting them to eat to their fill, and to quaff wine abundantly, and thus to recompense themselves, at this one banquet, for the many days when they had gone without a dinner. But, whenever the mariners were not looking at them, (which was pretty often, as they looked chiefly into the basins and platters), the beautiful woman and her damsels turned aside and laughed. Even the servants, as they knelt down to present the dishes, might be seen to grin and sneer while the guests were helping themselves to the offered dainties.

And once in a while the strangers seemed to taste something that they did not like.

"Here is an odd kind of a spice in this dish," said one. "I can't say it quite suits my palate. Down it goes, however."

"Send a good draught of wine down your throat," said his comrade on the next throne. "That is the stuff to make this sort of cookery taste well. Though, I must needs say, the wine has a queer taste too. But, the more I drink of it the better I like the flavour."

Whatever little fault they might find with the dishes, they sat at dinner a prodigiously long while, and it would really have made you ashamed to see how they swilled down the liquor and gobbled up the food. They sat on golden thrones, to be sure, but they behaved like pigs in a sty,

and if they had had their wits about them, they might have guessed that this was the opinion of their beautiful hostess and her maidens. At length they began to give over, from mere incapacity to hold any more.

They all left off eating and leaned back on their thrones with a stupid and helpless aspect that made them ridiculous to behold. When their hostess saw this, she laughed aloud; so did her four damsels; so did the two-and-twenty serving-men that bore the dishes, and their two-and-twenty fellows that poured out the wine. And the louder they all laughed, the more stupid and helpless did the two-and-twenty gluttons look. Then the beautiful woman took her stand in the middle of the saloon, and, stretching out a slender rod (it had been all the while in her hand, although they never noticed it till this moment), she turned it from one guest to another, until each had felt it pointed at himself. Beautiful as her face was, and though there was a smile on it, it looked just as wicked and mischievous as the ugliest serpent that ever was seen; and fat-witted as the voyagers had made themselves, they began to suspect that they had fallen into the power of an evil-minded enchantress.

"Wretches," cried she, "you have abused a lady's hospitality, and in this princely saloon your behaviour has been suited to a hog-pen. You are already swine in everything but your human form, which you disgrace, and which I myself should be ashamed to keep a moment longer were you to share it with me. Assume your proper shapes, gluttons begone to the sty!"

But, brutes as they certainly were, they yet had enough of human nature in them to be shocked at their own hideousness; and they uttered a vile grunt and squeal. So harsh and ear-piercing it was that you would have fancied a butcher was sticking his knife into each of their throats:

or, at the very least, that somebody was pulling every hog by his funny little twist of a tail.

"Begone to your sty!" repeated the enchantress, giving them some smart strokes with her wand, and then she turned to the serving-men. "Drive out these swine, and throw down some acorns for them to eat."

Meantime, as I told you before, Eurylochus had waited, and waited, and waited in the entrance-hall of the palace without being able to comprehend what had befallen his friends. At last, when the swinish uproar resounded through the palace, and when he saw the image of a hog in the marble basin, he thought it best to hasten back to the vessel and inform the wise Ulysses of these marvellous occurrences. So he ran as fast as he could down the steps, and never stopped to draw breath till he reached the shore.

"Why do you come here alone?" asked King Ulysses as soon as he saw him. "Where are your two-and-twenty comrades?"

At these questions, Eurylochus burst into tears.

"Alas!" cried he, "I greatly fear that we shall never see one of their faces again."

Then he told Ulysses all that had happened as far as he knew it, and added that he suspected the beautiful woman to be a vile enchantress, and the marble palace, magnificent as it looked, to be only a dismal cavern in reality. As for his companions, he could not imagine what had become of them, unless they had been given to the swine to be devoured alive. At this intelligence all the voyagers were greatly affrighted. But Ulysses lost no time in girding on his sword, and hanging his bow and quiver over his shoulders, and taking a spear in his right hand. When his followers saw their wise leader making

these preparations, they enquired whither he was going, and earnestly besought him not to leave them.

Had his followers dared, they would have detained him by force. But King Ulysses frowned sternly on them, and shook his spear, and bade them keep him at their peril. Seeing him so determined, they let him go, and sat down on the sand, as disconsolate a set of people as could be, waiting and praying for his return.

It happened to Ulysses, just as before, that when he had gone a few steps from the edge of the cliff, the purple bird came fluttering towards him, crying, "Peep, peep, pe-weep!" and using all the art it could to persuade him to go no farther.

"What may you be, little bird?" cried Ulysses. "You are arrayed like a king, in purple and gold, and wear a golden crown upon your head. Is it because I too am a king that you desire so earnestly to speak with me? If you can talk in human language, say what you would have me do."

"Peep!" answered the purple bird very dolorously. "Peep, peep, pe-weep!"

Certainly there lay some heavy anguish on the little bird's heart, and it was a sorrowful predicament that he could not at least have the consolation of telling what it was. But Ulysses had no time to waste in trying to get at the mystery. He, therefore, quickened his pace, and had gone a good way along the pleasant wood-path, when there met him a young man of very brisk and intelligent aspect, and clad in a rather singular garb. He wore a short cloak, and a sort of cap that seemed to be furnished with a pair of wings; and, from the lightness of his step, you would have supposed that there might likewise be wings on his feet. To enable him to walk better (for he was always on one journey or another) he carried a winged

staff, around which two serpents were wriggling and twisting. In short, I have said enough to make you guess that it was Hermes, and Ulysses (who knew him of old, and had learned a great deal of his wisdom from him) recognised him in a moment.

"Whither are you going in such a hurry, Ulysses?" asked Hermes. "Do you not know that this island is enchanted? A wicked enchantress (whose name is Circe, the sister of King Ætes) dwells in the marble palace which you see yonder among the trees. By her magic arts she changes every human being into the brute, beast, or fowl whom he happened most to resemble"

"That little bird which I met at the edge of the cliff," exclaimed Ulysses, "was he a human being once?"

"Yes", answered Hermes. "He was once a king named Picus, and a pretty good sort of a king too, only rather too proud of his purple robe, and his crown, and the golden chain about his neck; so he was forced to take the shape of a gaudy-feathered bird. The lions and wolves and tigers, which will come running to meet you in front of the palace, were formerly fierce and cruel men, resembling in their dispositions the wild beasts whose forms they now rightfully wear."

"And my poor companions," said Ulysses, "have they undergone a similar change through the arts of this wicked Circe?"

"You well know what gluttons they were," replied Hermes, and, rogue that he was, he could not help laughing at the joke,—"so you will not be surprised to hear that they have all taken the shapes of swine! If Circe had never done anything worse, I really should not think her so very much to blame."

"But can I do nothing to help them?" enquired Ulysses.

"It will require all your wisdom," said Hermes, "and a little of my own into the bargain, to keep your royal and sagacious self from being transformed into a fox. But do as I bid you, and the matter may end better than it has began."

While he was speaking, Hermes seemed to be in search of something; he went stooping along the ground, and soon laid his hand on a little plant with a snow-white flower, which he plucked and smelt. Ulysses had been looking at the very spot only just before, and it appeared to him that the plant had burst into full flower the instant that Hermes touched it with his fingers.

"Take this flower, King Ulysses," said he. "Guard it as you do your eyesight; for I can assure you it is exceedingly rare and precious, and you might seek the whole earth over without ever finding another like it. Keep it in your hand, and smell it frequently after you enter the palace, and while you are talking with the enchantress. Especially when she offers you food, or a draught of wine out of her goblet, be careful to fill your nostrils with the flower's fragrance. Follow these directions and you may defy her magic arts to change you into a fox."

Hermes then gave him some further advice how to behave, and, bidding him be bold and prudent, again assured him that, powerful as Circe was, he would have a fair prospect of coming safely out of her enchanted palace. After listening attentively, Ulysses thanked his good friend and resumed his way. But he had taken only a few steps when, recollecting some other questions which he wished to ask, he turned round again, and beheld nobody on the spot where Hermes had stood; for that winged cap of his, and those winged shoes, with the help of the winged staff, had carried him quickly out of sight.

When Ulysses reached the lawn in front of the palace the lions and other savage animals came bounding to meet him, and would have fawned upon him and licked his feet. But the wise king struck at them with his long spear, and sternly bade them begone out of his path, for he knew that they had once been bloodthirsty men, and would now tear him limb from limb, instead of fawning upon him could they do the mischief that was in their hearts. The wild beasts yelped and glared at him, and stood at a distance while he ascended the palace steps.

The king likewise heard the noise of the shuttle in the loom, and the sweet melody of the beautiful woman's song, and then the pleasant voices of herself and the four maidens talking together, with peals of merry laughter intermixed. But Ulysses did not waste much time in listening to the laughter or the song. He leaned his spear against one of the pillars of the hall, and then, after loosening his sword in the scabbard, stepped boldly forward, and threw the folding-doors wide open. The moment she beheld his stately figure standing in the doorway, the beautiful woman rose from the loom and ran to meet him, with a glad smile throwing its sunshine over her face, and both her hands extended.

"Welcome, brave stranger!" cried she. "We were expecting you."

"Your companions," said she, "have already been received into my palace, and have enjoyed the hospitable treatment to which the propriety of their behaviour so well entitles them. If such be your pleasure, you shall first take some refreshment, and then join them in the elegant apartment which they now occupy. See, I and my maidens have been weaving their figures this piece of tapestry."

She pointed to the web of beautifully woven cloth in the loom. Circe and the four nymphs must have been

very diligently at work since the arrival of the mariners, for a great many yards of tapestry had now been wrought. In this new part Ulysses saw his two-and-twenty friends represented as sitting on cushioned and canopied thrones, greedily devouring dainties, and quaffing deep draughts of wine. The work had not yet gone any further. Oh no, indeed! The enchantress was far too cunning to let Ulysses see the mischief which her magic arts had since brought upon the gormandizers.

"As for yourself, valiant sir," said Circe, "judging by the dignity of your aspect, I take you to be nothing less than a king. Deign to follow me, and you shall be treated as befits your rank."

So Ulysses followed her into the saloon, where his two-and-twenty comrades had devoured the banquet which ended so disastrously for themselves. But all this while he had held the snow-white flower in his hand and had constantly smelt of it while Circe was speaking; and as he crossed the threshold of the saloon, he took good care to inhale several long and deep sniffs of its fragrance. Instead of two-and-twenty thrones, which had before been ranged around the wall, there was now only a single throne in the centre of the apartment. But this was surely the most magnificent seat that ever a king or an emperor rested himself upon, all made of chased gold, studded with precious stones, with a cushion that looked like a soft heap of living roses, and overhung by a canopy of sunlight, which Circe knew how to weave into drapery. The enchantress took Ulysses by the hand, and made him sit down upon this dazzling throne. Then, clapping her hands she summoned the chief butler.

"Bring hither," said she, "the goblet that is set apart for kings to drink out of. And fill it with the same delicious wine which my royal brother, King Ætes, praised

so highly when he last visited me with my fair daughter Medea. That good and amiable child! Were she now here, it would delight her to see me offering this wine to my honoured guest."

But Ulysses, while the butler was gone for the wine, held the snow-white flower to his nose.

"Is it a wholesome wine?" he asked.

At this the four maiden tittered; whereupon the enchantress looked round at them with an aspect of severity.

"It is the most wholesome juice that ever was squeezed out of the grape," said she; "for, instead of disguising a man, as other liquor is apt to do, it brings him to his true self, and shows him as he ought to be."

The chief butler liked nothing better than to see people turned into swine, or making any kind of a beast of themselves; so he made haste to bring the royal goblet, filled with a liquid like gold, which kept sparkling upward, and throwing a sunny spray over the brim. But, delightful as the wine looked, it was mingled with the most potent enchantments that Circe knew how to concoct. For every drop of the pure grape-juice, there were two drops of the pure mischief; and the danger of the thing was that the mischief made it taste all the better. The mere smell of the bubbles which effervesced at the brim was enough to turn a man's blood into pig's bristles, or make a lion's claws grow out of his fingers, or a fox's brush behind him.

"Drink, my noble guest," said Circe, smiling as she presented him with the goblet. "You will find in this draught a solace for your troubles."

King Ulysses took the goblet with his right hand, while with his left he held the snow-white flower to his nostrils and drew in so long a breath that his lungs were quite filled with its pure and simple fragrance. Then, drinking

off all the wine, he looked the enchantress calmly in the face.

"Wretch," cried Circe, giving him a smart stroke with her wand, "how dare you keep your human shape a moment longer? Take the form of the brute whom you resemble. If a hog, go join your fellow-swine in the sty; if a lion, a wolf, a tiger, go howl with the wild beasts on the lawn; if a fox, go exercise your craft in stealing poultry. Thou hast quaffed off my wine, and canst be a man no longer."

But such was the virtue of the snow-white flower, instead of wallowing down from his throne in swinish shape, or taking any other brutal form, Ulysses looked even more manly and kingly than before. He gave the magic goblet a toss, and sent it clashing over the marble floor to the farthest end of the saloon. Then, drawing his sword, he seized the enchantress by her beautiful ringlets, and made a gesture as if he meant to strike off her head at one blow.

"Wicked Circe," cried he in a terrible voice, "this sword shall put an end to thy enchantments. Thou shalt die, vile wretch, and do no more mischief in the world by tempting human beings into the vices which make beasts of them."

The tone and countenance of Ulysses were so awful, and his sword gleamed so brightly, and seemed to have so intolerably keen an edge, that Circe was almost killed by the mere fright, without waiting for a blow. The chief butler scrambled out of the saloon, picking up the golden goblet as he went; and the enchantress and the four maidens fell on their knees, wringing their hands and screaming for mercy.

"Spare me!" cried Circe, "spare me, royal and wise Ulysses. For now I know that thou art he, of whom Hermes fore-warned me, the most prudent of mortals, against whom

no enchantments can prevail. Thou only couldst have conquered Circe. Spare me, wisest of men. I will show thee true hospitality, and even give myself to be thy slave, and this magnificent palace to be henceforth thy home."

Ulysses would not be pacified until Circe had taken a solemn oath to change back his companions, and as many others as he should direct, from their present forms of beast or bird into their former shapes of men.

"On these conditions," said he in a solemn tone of voice, "I consent to spare your life. Otherwise you must die upon the spot."

With a drawn sword hanging over her, the enchantress would readily have consented to do as much good as she had hitherto done mischief, however little she might like such employment. She therefore led Ulysses out of the back entrance of the palace, and showed him the swine in their sty.

"These must certainly be my comrades," said Ulysses; "I recognize their disposition. They are hardly worth the trouble of changing them into the human form again. Nevertheless, we will have it done, lest their bad example should corrupt the other hogs. Let them take their original shapes, therefore, Dame Circe, if your skill is equal to the task. It will require greater magic, I trow, than it did to make swine of them."

So Circe waved her wand again, and repeated a few magic words, at the sound of which the two-and-twenty hogs pricked up their pendulous ears. It was a wonder to behold how their snouts grew shorter and shorter, and their mouths (which they seemed to be sorry for, because they could not gobble so expeditiously), smaller and smaller, and how one and another began to stand upon his hind legs, and scratch his nose with his fore trotters. At first the spectators hardly knew whether to call them hogs or men, but by and by they came to the conclusion that

they rather resembled the latter. Finally, there stood the twenty-two comrades of Ulysses, looking pretty much the same as when they left the vessel.

To tell the truth, there was a suspicious kind of a grunt in their voices, and for a long time afterwards they spoke gruffly, and were apt to set up a squeal.

"It must depend on your own future behaviour," added Ulysses, "whether you do not find your way back to the sty."

At this moment the note of a bird sound from the branches of a neighbouring tree.

"Peep, peep, pe-wee-ep!"

It was the purple bird, which all this while had been sitting over their heads, watching what was going forward, and hoping that Ulysses would remember how he had done his utmost to keep him and his followers out of harm's way. Ulysses ordered Circe instantly to make a king of this good little fowl, and leave him exactly as she found him. Hardly were the words spoken, and before the bird had time to utter another "Pe-weep," King Picus leaped down from the bough of the tree, as majestic a sovereign as any in the world, dressed in a long purple robe and gorgeous yellow stockings, with a splendidly wrought collar about his neck, and a golden crown upon his head. He and King Ulysses exchanged with one another the courtesies which belonged to their elevated rank. But from that time forth King Picus was no longer proud of his crown and his trappings of royalty, nor of the fact of his being a king: he felt himself merely the upper servant of his people, and that it must be his life-long task to make them better and happier.

As for the lions, tigers and wolves (though Circe would have restored them to their former shapes at his slightest word), Ulysses thought it advisable that they should remain

as they now were, and thus give warning of their cruel dispositions, instead of going about under the guise of men, and pretending to human sympathies, while their hearts had the bloodthirstiness of wild beasts. So he let them howl as much they liked, but never troubled his head about them. And when everything was settled according to his pleasure, he sent to summon the remainder of his comrades whom he had left at the sea-shore. These having arrived, with the prudent Eurylochus at their head, they all made themselves comfortable in Circe's enchanted palace until quite rested and refreshed from the toils and hardships of their voyage.

22. MIDAS.

Once upon a time, there lived a very rich man, a king besides, whose name was Midas ; and he had a little daughter called Marygold.

This king Midas was fonder of gold than of anything else in the world. He valued his royal crown chiefly because it was composed of that precious metal. If he loved anything better, or half so well, it was the little maiden who played so merrily around her father's footstool. But the more Midas loved his daughter the more did he desire and seek for wealth. He thought, foolish man ! that the best thing he could possibly do for this dear child would be to bequeath her the most immense pile of yellow, glistening coin that had ever been heaped together since the world was made. Thus he gave all his thoughts and all his time to this one purpose. If ever he happened to gaze for an instant at the gold-tinted clouds of sunset, he wished that they were real gold, and that they could be locked safely in his strong box. When little Marygold

ran to meet him with bunches of buttercups and dandelions, he used to say: "Pooh, pooh, child! if these flowers were as golden as they look, they would be worth the plucking!"

And yet, in his earlier days before he was so entirely possessed of this insane desire for riches, King Midas had shown a great taste for flowers. He had planted a garden in which grew the biggest, most beautiful and sweetest roses that any mortal ever saw or smelt.

These roses were still growing in the garden, as large, as lovely, and as fragrant as when Midas used to pass whole hours in gazing at them, and inhaling their perfume. But now, if he looked at them at all, it was only to calculate how much the garden would be worth if each of the innumerable rose-petals were a thin plate of gold. And though he once was fond of music, the only music for poor Midas now, was the chink of one coin against another.

At length (as people always grow more and more foolish, unless they take care to grow wiser and wiser) Midas had got to be so exceedingly unreasonable that he could scarcely bear to see or touch any object that was not gold. He made it his custom, therefore, to pass a large portion of every day, in a dark and dreary apartment underground, in the basement of his palace. It was here that he kept his wealth. To this dismal place - it was little better than a dungeon - Midas betook himself whenever he wanted to be particularly happy. Here, after carefully locking the door, he would take a bag of gold coin, or a gold cup as big as a wash-bowl, or a heavy golden bar, or a measure of gold-dust and bring them from the obscure corners of the room into the one bright and narrow sunbeam that fell from the dungeon-like window. He valued the sunbeam for no other reason than that his treasure would not shine without its help. And then would he reckon over

the coins in the bag ; toss up the bar, and catch it as it came down ; sift the gold dust through his fingers ; look at the funny image of his own face, as reflected in the burnished circumference of the cup ; and whisper to himself : " O Midas, rich King Midas, what a happy man art thou ! " But it was laughable to see how the image of his face kept grinning at him out of the polished surface of the cup. It seemed to be aware of his foolish behaviour, and to have an inclination to make fun of him.

Midas called himself a happy man, but felt that he was not yet quite so happy as he might be. The very zenith of enjoyment would never be reached unless the whole world were to become his treasure-room, and be filled with yellow metal which should be all his own.

Midas was enjoying himself in his treasure-room one day as usual, when he perceived a shadow fall over the heaps of gold ; and, looking suddenly up, what should he behold but the figure of a stranger, standing in the bright and narrow sunbeam ! It was a young man with a cheerful and ruddy face. Whether it was that the imagination of King Midas threw a yellow tinge over everything or whatever the cause might be, he could not help fancying that the smile with which the stranger regarded him had a kind of golden radiance in it. Certainly, although his figure intercepted the sunshine, there was now a brighter gleam upon all the piled-up treasure than before. Even the remotest corners had their share of it, and were lighted up, when the stranger smiled, as with tips of flame and sparkles of fire.

As Midas knew that he had carefully turned the key in the lock, and that no mortal strength could possibly break into his treasure-room, he, of course, concluded that his visitor must be something more than mortal. It is no matter about telling you who he was. In those days, when the earth was comparatively a new affair, it was supposed

to be often the resort of beings endowed with supernatural power, who used to interest themselves in the joys and sorrows of men, women, and children, half-playfully and half-seriously. Midas had met such beings before now, and was not sorry to meet one of them again. The stranger's aspect, indeed, was so good-humoured and kindly, if not beneficent, that it would have been unreasonable to suspect him of intending any mischief. It was far more probable that he came to do Midas a favour. And what could that favour be unless to multiply his heaps of treasure?

The stranger gazed about the room and when his lustrous smile had glistened upon all the golden objects that were there, he turned again to Midas.

"You are a wealthy man, friend Midas!" he observed. "I doubt whether any other four walls on earth contain so much gold as you have contrived to pile up in this room."

"I have done pretty well, pretty well," answered Midas in a discontented tone. "But, after all, it is but a trifle, when you consider that it has taken me my whole life to get it together. If one could live a thousand years, he might have time to grow rich!"

"What!" exclaimed the stranger. "Then you are not satisfied?"

Midas shook his head.

"And pray what would satisfy you?" asked the stranger, "Merely for the curiosity of the thing I should be glad to know."

Midas paused and meditated. He felt a presentiment that this stranger, with such a golden lustre in his good-humoured smile, had come hither with both the power and the purpose of gratifying his utmost wishes. Now, therefore, was the fortunate moment when he had but to speak

and obtain whatever possible, or seemingly impossible, thing it might come into his head to ask. So he thought, and thought, and thought, and heaped up one golden mountain upon another in his imagination without being able to imagine them big enough. At last a bright idea occurred to King Midas. It seemed really as bright as the glistening metal which he loved so much.

Raising his head, he looked the lustrous stranger full in the face.

"Well, Midas," observed his visitor, "I see that you have at length hit upon something that will satisfy you. Tell me your wish."

"It is only this," replied Midas. "I am weary of collecting my treasures with so much trouble, and beholding the heap so diminutive after I have done my best. I wish everything that I touch to be changed to gold!"

"The Golden Touch!" exclaimed he. "You certainly deserve credit, friend Midas, for striking out so brilliant a conception. But are you quite sure that this will satisfy you?"

"How could it fail?" said Midas.

"And will you never regret the possession of it?"

"What could induce me to?" asked Midas. "I ask nothing else to render me perfectly happy."

"Be it as you wish, then," replied the stranger, waving his hand in token of farewell. "To-morrow, at sunrise, you will find yourself gifted with the Golden Touch."

The figure of the stranger then became exceedingly bright, and Midas involuntarily closed his eyes. On opening them again he beheld only one yellow sunbeam in the room, and all around him the glistening of the precious

metal which he had spent his life in hoarding up. Then Midas fell asleep.

Day had hardly peeped over the hills when King Midas was wide awake, and, stretching his arms out of bed, began to touch the objects that were within reach. He was anxious to prove whether the Golden Touch had really come, according to the stranger's promise. So he laid his finger on a chair by the bedside, and on various other things, but was grievously disappointed to perceive that they remained of exactly the same substance as before. Indeed he felt very much afraid that he had only dreamed about the lustrous stranger, or else that the latter had been making game of him. And what a miserable affair would it be if, after all his hopes, Midas must content himself with what little gold he could scrape together by ordinary means, instead of creating it by a touch!

At this time, it was only the gray dawn, with but a streak of brightness along the edge of the sky, where Midas could not see it. He lay in a very disconsolate mood, regretting the downfall of his hopes, and kept growing sadder and sadder, until the earliest sunbeam shone through the window and gilded the ceiling over his head. It seemed to Midas that this bright yellow sunbeam was reflected in rather a singular way on the white covering of the bed. On looking more closely, what was his astonishment and delight when he found that this linen fabric had been transmuted to what seemed a woven texture of the purest and brightest gold! The Golden Touch had come to him with the first sunbeam!

Midas started up in a kind of joyful frenzy, and ran about the room grasping at everything that happened to be in his way. He seized one of the bed-posts, and it became immediately a fluted golden pillar. He pulled aside a window curtain, in order to admit a clear spectacle

of the wonders which he was performing, and the tassel grew heavy in his hand—a mass of gold. He hurriedly put on his clothes, and was enraptured to see himself in a magnificent suit of gold cloth, which retained its flexibility and softness, although it burdened him a little with its weight. He drew out his handkerchief, which little Mary-gold had hemmed for him. That was likewise gold, with the dear child's neat and pretty stitches running all along the border in gold thread !

Somehow or other this last transformation did not quite please King Midas. He would rather that his little daughter's handiwork should have remained just the same as when she had climbed his knee and put it into his hand.

But it was not worth while to vex himself about trifles. Midas now took his spectacles from his pocket and put them on his nose, in order that he might see more distinctly what he was about. In those days spectacles for common people had not been invented, but were already worn by kings ; else how could Midas have had any ? To his great perplexity, however, excellent as the glasses were, he discovered that he could not possibly see through them. But this was the most natural thing in the world ; for, on taking them off, the transparent crystals turned out to be plates of yellow metal, and, of course, were worthless as spectacles though valuable as gold. It struck Midas as rather inconvenient that, with all his wealth, he could never again be rich enough to own a pair of serviceable spectacles.

“ It is no great matter, nevertheless,” said he to himself very philosophically. “ We cannot expect any great good without its being accompanied with some small inconvenience. The Golden Touch is worth the sacrifice of a pair of spectacles at least, if not of one's very eyesight. My

own eyes will serve for ordinary purposes, and little Marygold will soon be old enough to read to me."

Wise King Midas was so exalted by his good fortune that the palace seemed not sufficiently spacious to contain him. He, therefore, went downstairs, and smiled on observing that the balustrade of the staircase became a bar of burnished gold as his hand passed over it in his descent. He lifted the doorlatch (it was brass only a moment ago, but golden when his fingers quitted it) and emerged into the garden. Here, as it happened, he found a great number of beautiful roses in full bloom, and others in all the stages of lovely bud and blossom. Very delicious was their fragrance in the morning breeze.

But Midas knew a way to make them far more precious, according to his way of thinking, than roses had ever been before. So he took great pains in going from bush to bush, and exercised his magic touch most indefatigably, until every individual flower and bud, and even the worms at the heart of some of them were changed to gold. By the time this good work was completed, King Midas was summoned to breakfast; and as the morning air had given him an excellent appetite, he made haste back to the palace.

What was usually a king's breakfast in the days of Midas I really do not know, and cannot stop now to investigate. To the best of my belief, however, on this particular morning the breakfast consisted of hot cakes, nice little brook trout, roasted potatoes, fresh boiled eggs, and coffee for King Midas himself, and a bowl of bread-and-milk for his daughter Marygold. At all events this is a breakfast fit to set before a king, and, whether he had it or not, King Midas could not have had a better.

Little Marygold had not yet made her appearance. Her father ordered her to be called, and, seating himself

at table, awaited the child's coming in order to begin his own breakfast. To do Midas justice, he really loved his daughter, and loved her so much the more this morning on account of the good fortune which had befallen him. It was not a great while before he heard her coming along the passage-way crying bitterly. This circumstance surprised him, because Marygold was one of the most cheerful little people whom you would see in a summer's day, and hardly shed a thimbleful of tears in a twelvemonth. When Midas heard her sobs, he determined to put little Marygold into better spirits by an agreeable surprise; so, leaning across the table, he touched his daughter's bowl (which was a china one, with pretty figures all round it) and transformed it to gleaming gold.

Meanwhile Marygold slowly and disconsolately opened the door, and showed herself, with her apron at her eyes, still sobbing as if her heart would break.

"How now, my little lady!" cried Midas. "Pray what is the matter with you this bright morning?"

Marygold, without taking the apron from her eyes, held out her hand, in which was one of the roses which Midas had so recently transformed.

"Beautiful!" exclaimed her father, "And what is there in this magnificent golden rose to make you cry?"

"Ah, dear Father," answered the child, as well as her sobs would let her, "it is not beautiful, but the ugliest flower that ever grew! As soon as I was dressed I ran into the garden to gather some roses for you, because I know you like them, and like them the better when gathered by your little daughter. But, Oh dear, dear me! what do you think has happened? Such a misfortune! All the beautiful roses, that smelt so sweetly and had so many lovely blushes, are blighted and spoilt! They are grown quite yellow, as you see this one, and have no longer any fragrance! What can be the matter with them?"

"Pooh, my dear little girl! pray don't cry about it!" said Midas, who was ashamed to confess that he himself had wrought the change which so greatly afflicted her. "Sit down and eat your bread-and-milk! You will find it easy enough to exchange a golden rose like that (which will last hundreds of years) for an ordinary one which would wither in a day."

"I don't care for such roses as this!" cried Marygold, tossing it contemptuously away. "It has no smell, and the hard petals prick my nose!"

The child now sat down to table, but was so occupied with her grief for the blighted roses that she did not even notice the wonderful change in her china bowl. Perhaps this was all the better; for Marygold was accustomed to take pleasure in looking at the queer figures and strange trees and houses, that were painted on the circumference of the bowl, and these ornaments were now entirely lost in the yellow hue of the metal.

Midas, meanwhile, had poured out a cup of coffee, and, as a matter of course, the coffee-pot, whatever metal it may have been when he took it up, was gold when he set it down. He thought to himself that it was rather an extravagant style of splendour in a king of his simple habits to breakfast off a service of gold, and began to be puzzled with the difficulty of keeping his treasures safe. The cupboard and the kitchen would no longer be a secure place of deposit for articles so valuable as golden bowls and coffee-pots.

Amid these thoughts, he lifted a spoonful of coffee to his lips, and, sipping it, was astonished to perceive that, the instant his lips touched the liquid, it became molten gold, and the next moment hardened into a lump!

"Ha!" exclaimed Midas, rather aghast.

"What is the matter, Father?" asked little Marygold, gazing at him with the tears still standing in her eyes.

"Nothing, child, nothing!" said Midas. "Eat your bread-and-milk before it gets quite cold."

He took one of the nice little trout on his plate, and, by way of experience, touched its tail with his finger. To his horror it was immediately transmuted from an admirably fried brook-trout into a gold fish, though not one of those gold fishes which people often keep in glass globes as ornaments for the home. No! but it was really a metallic fish, and looked as if it had been very cunningly made by the nicest goldsmith in the world. Its little bones were now golden wires; its fins and tail were thin plates of gold; and there were the marks of the fork in it, and all the delicate, frothy appearance of a nicely fried fish, exactly imitated in metal. A very pretty piece of work, as you may suppose; only King Midas, just at that moment, would much rather have had a real trout in his dish than this elaborate and valuable imitation of one.

"I don't quite see," thought he to himself, "how I am to get any breakfast!"

"Well, this is a quandary!" thought he, leaning back in his chair, and looking quite enviously at little Marygold, who was now eating her bread-and-milk with great satisfaction. "Such a costly breakfast before me, and nothing that can be eaten!"

Hoping that, by dint of great despatch, he might avoid what he now felt to be a considerable inconvenience, King Midas next snatched a hot potato, and attempted to cram it into his mouth, and swallow it in a hurry. But the Golden Touch was too nimble for him. He found his mouth full, not of mealy potato, but of solid metal, which so burnt his tongue that he roared aloud, and, jumping up

from the table, began to dance and stamp about the room, both with pain and affright.

"Father, dear Father!" cried little Marygold, who was a very affectionate child, "pray what is the matter? Have you burnt your mouth?"

"Ah, dear child," groaned Midas dolefully, "I don't know what is to become of your poor father!"

And truly was there ever such a pitiable case? Here was literally the richest breakfast that could be set before a king, and its very richness made it absolutely good for nothing. The poorest labourer, sitting down to his crust of bread and cup of water, was far better off than King Midas, whose delicate food was really worth its weight in gold. And what was to be done? Already at breakfast, Midas was excessively hungry. Would he be less so by dinner-time? And how ravenous would be his appetite for supper, which must undoubtedly consist of the same sort of indigestible dishes as those now before him! How many days, think you, would he survive a continuance of this rich fare?

Nevertheless, so great was his hunger, and the perplexity of his situation, that he again groaned aloud, and very grievously too. Our pretty Marygold could endure it no longer. She sat a moment gazing at her father, and trying, with all the might of her little wits, to find out what was the matter with him. Then, with a sweet and sorrowful impulse to comfort him, she started from her chair, and, running to Midas, threw her arms affectionately about his knees. He bent down and kissed her. He felt that his little daughter's love was worth a thousand times, more than he had gained by the Golden Touch.

"My precious, precious Marygold!" cried he.

But Marygold made no answer.

Alas! what had he done? How fatal was the gift which the stranger bestowed! The moment the lips of Midas touched Marygold's forehead, a change had taken place. Her sweet, rosy face, so full of affection as it had been, assumed a glittering yellow colour, with yellow tear-drops congealing on her cheeks. Her beautiful brown ringlets took the same tint. Her soft and tender little form grew hard and inflexible within her father's encircling arm. Oh, terrible misfortune! The victim of his insatiable desire for wealth, little Marygold was a human child no longer, but a golden statue!

While he was in this tumult of despair, he suddenly beheld a stranger standing, near the door. Midas bent down his head without speaking, for he recognized the same figure which had appeared to him the day before in the treasure-room, and had bestowed on him this disastrous gift of the Golden Touch. The stranger's countenance still wore a smile, which seemed to shed a yellow lustre all about the room, and gleamed on little Marygold's image, and on the other objects that had been changed by the touch of Midas.

"Well, friend Midas," said the stranger, "pray how do you succeed with the Golden Touch?"

Midas shook his head.

"I am very miserable!" "Indeed!" exclaimed the stranger, "And how happens that? Have I not faithfully kept my promise with you? Have you not everything that your heart desired?"

"Gold is not everything," answered Midas. "And I have lost all that my heart really cared for."

"Ah! So you have made a discovery since yesterday?" observed the stranger. "Let us see, then, which of these

two things do you think is really worth the most—the gift of the Golden Touch, or one cup of dear cold water ? ”

“ O blessed water ! ” exclaimed Midas. “ It will never moisten my parched throat again.”

“ The Golden Touch,” continued the stranger, “ or a crust of bread ? ”

“ A piece of bread,” answered Midas, “ is worth all the gold on earth ! ”

“ The Golden Touch ”, asked the stranger, “ or your own little Marygold, warm, soft, and loving, as she was an hour ago ? ”

“ O my child, my dear child ! ” cried poor Midas, wringing his hands, “ I would not have given that one small dimple in her chin for the power of changing this whole big earth into a solid lump of gold ! ”

“ You are wiser than you were, King Midas ! ” said the stranger, looking seriously at him. “ Your own heart, I perceive, has not been entirely changed from flesh to gold. Were it so, your case would indeed be desperate. But you appear to be still capable of understanding that the commonest things, such as lie within everybody’s grasp, are more valuable than the riches which so many mortals sigh and struggle after. Tell me now, do you sincerely desire to rid yourself of this Golden Touch ? ”

“ It is hateful to me ! ” replied Midas.

A fly settled on his nose, but immediately fell to the floor ; for it, too, had become gold ! Midas shuddered.

“ Go, then,” said the stranger, “ and plunge into the river that glides past the bottom of your garden. Take likewise a vase of the same water, and sprinkle it over any object that you desire to change back

again from gold into its former substance. If you do this in earnestness and sincerity, it may possibly repair the mischief which your avarice has occasioned."

King Midas bowed low ; and when he lifted his head, the stranger had vanished.

You will easily believe that Midas lost no time in snatching up a great earthen pitcher (but, alas me ! it was no longer earthen after he touched it) and hastening to the river side. As he scampered along, and forced his way through the shrubbery, it was positively marvellous to see how the foliage turned yellow behind him, as if the autumn had been there and nowhere else. On reaching the river's brink he plunged headlong in, without waiting so much as to pull off his shoes.

"Poof ! poof ! poof !" snorted King Midas as his head emerged out of the water. "Well this is really a refreshing bath, and I think it must have quite washed away the Golden Touch. And now for filling my pitcher !"

As he dipped the pitcher into the water, it gladdened his very heart to see it change from gold into the same good, honest earthen vessel which it had been before he touched it. He was conscious, also, of a change within himself. A cold, hard, and heavy weight seemed to have gone out of his bosom.

King Midas hastened back to the palace ; and, I suppose the servants knew not what to make of it when they saw their royal master so carefully bringing home an earthen pitcher of water. But that water, which was to undo all the mischief that his folly had wrought, was more precious to Midas than an ocean of molten gold could have been. The first thing he did, as you need hardly be told, was to sprinkle it by handfuls over the golden figure of little Marygold.

"Pray do not, dear Father!" cried she. "See how you have wet my nice frock, which I put on only this morning!"

For Marygold did not know that she had been a little golden statue; nor could she remember anything that had happened since the moment when she ran with out-stretched arms to comfort poor King Midas.

Her father did not think it necessary to tell his beloved child how very foolish he had been, but contented himself with showing how much wiser he had now grown. For this purpose he led little Marygold into the garden, where he sprinkled all the remainder of the water over the rose-bushes, and with such good effect that above five thousand roses recovered their beautiful bloom. There were two circumstances, however, which, as long as he lived, used to put King Midas in mind of the Golden Touch. One was that the sands of the river sparkled like gold; the other, that little Marygold's hair had now a golden tinge, which he had never observed in it before she had been changed by the effect of his kiss. This change of hue was really an improvement, and made Marygold's hair richer than in her babyhood.

When King Midas, had grown quite an old man, and used to trot Marygold's children on his knee, he was fond of telling them this marvellous story, pretty much as I have now told it to you. And then would he stroke their glossy ringlets, and tell them that their hair likewise had a rich shade of gold, which they had inherited from their mother.

"And, to tell you the truth, my precious little folks," quoth King Midas, diligently trotting the children all the while, "ever since that morning I have hated the very sight of all other gold save this!"

23. HERO AND LEANDER.

The Bards of Greece when telling the sad story of Troy, used oft to relate one immortal tale of Love. They sang the praises of that faithful lover Leander, the bold and handsome youth of Abydos, who wooed fair Hero, priest of Aphrodite at her temple on the shores of Thrace. A lovely maid, indeed, was she, and many were the heroes of princely birth, who laid their homage at her feet, imploring her to bestow her charms on them and offering her wealth and power and all the things that mortal maid could crave for. But she smiled on none but Leander, who lived at once so near and yet so far from her shrine at Sestus. For the rough waters of the Hellespont rolled continually between them and their eyes strained across it to catch each other's smiles thrown in vain from Europe to Asia.

But Love, the all powerful, will find a way over the roughest seas. Day by day, as dusk fell slowly from the heavens and the stars began to peer forth. Leander used to creep down to the silent sea shore, awaiting the light of a torch with which Hero nightly beckoned him through the darkness to her sea-girt tower. Once he saw that signal, he boldly plunged into the waves bravely swimming across the raging channel, until, at length, he reached the Grecian Shore and the arms of his beloved bride. When Aurora shyly appeared in the eastern sky, he bade farewell to his Hero, and swam back to Abydos.

And this he did, winter and summer alike, and all went well until, one winter eve, there came a chill tempest. The waters of the Hellespont were white with foaming sea-horses, the wind roared, and all around was black as pitch. Yet, through the darkness shone the summoning torch and the stout-hearted Leander resolved not to disappoint his Grecian bride. So once again he plunged

into the stormy billows, but alas this time he was tossed astray, now dragged down beneath the black water; now cast up, so it seemed, to the very heavens. His breath failed; weaker and weaker grew his strokes; chill spray and blinding foam hid from his eyes the flickering beacon torch; until, at last, he sank beneath the waves, never again to rise alive.

All night long stood Hero at her window waiting and watching through the howling storm and anxiously straining her eyes to see if she could perceive her lover. At last when the first beams of the morning sun gilded the Hellespont, now calm and peaceful, as Hero looked forth from her tower, it was to see his white body, broken and torn, lying lifeless on the rocks below. With one heart-rending cry, the miserable maiden leaped into the waves to die beside her lover and be for ever united with him in story.

24. PYRAMUS AND THISBE.

In those far off days when the world was yet young, there dwelt in neighbour houses side by side, Pyramus and Thisbe, he the handsome youth, she the fairest maid in all the countryside. From childhood had they sprung up together and long had they been in love one with the other; but then, as often since, the course of true love never did run smooth, and the parents of both frowned on their wooing, nay even forbade them to meet. But the fire of love burned all the more fiercely for being covered up, until at length they discovered a way by which they could at least promise each other to be true till death.

Their homes were divided by a wall of mud bricks, in which the two lovers found a chink through which each could hear the other speak. Daily in the heat of the day when all save they were at rest, they had happy little conversations through this tiny chink.

So, for a time, they nursed their love in secret, until at length they decided that as their parents would never consent to their union, they would get united despite the opposition shown to them. Through the wall, a night was fixed, on which they should elude their parents' watchful guard, and hie them singly and by separate ways to a well-known landmark in the woods outside the city - the tomb of Ninus, and once there, never more would they agree to be parted.

So it was done. Now Thisbe, impatient to meet her lover, set off before the hour agreed on. Fearfully she hastened through the deserted streets; in dread of every shadow on she hurried, until she arrived at the tomb, over which hung a grove of trees. She looked around for Pyramus, but still he came not. She was listening anxiously for his footsteps, when suddenly she was startled by the roar of some unknown creature.

It was a fierce lion that bounded out of the thicket where it had been devouring its prey. The startled maiden did not wait to see its fiery eyes and its jaws dripping with gore. Throwing off her long cloak, she ran wildly through the forest never stopping till she reached a cave in which she might take refuge.

The lion, having had its meal, did not care to chase her, but it fell on Thisbe's cloak and tore it to pieces before it passed on to its hidden lair in the depths of the forest.

As Pyramus was coming to keep his tryst, he heard the fierce roaring and the shrieks of the voice he knew so well. Drawing his sword, he hastened on to the tomb, where all was now still.

"Thisbe," he cried, "Thisbe", but a mocking echo was the only response that he gained.

Soon to his horror he saw the ground marked by a lion's claws, and there, beside the tomb, lay Thisbe's torn cloak. Horrified and grief-stricken, he made no doubt that

that the lion had borne away his Thisbe, and, in his bitter sorrow, unwilling to live after the death of his beloved one, he drove his sword deep into his breast and fell expiring beside the tomb.

At daybreak Thisbe found courage to come forth from her hiding place and go again to the tomb where she hoped to be safe with Pyramus. Her heart throbbed with joy as she saw him lying beside the grove of trees as if asleep; but horror-stricken she saw him writhing in his death throes upon her cloak.

"Pyramus" cried she wildly raising his head, "Speak to me, say that I am dreaming".

At her voice he opened his eyes, already dim in death, and tried to smile and speak, but that effort was his last.

Then did Thisbe fill the wood with lamentations and cried.

"Death too tried to part us, but neither death nor the living can do so. Ah, cruel parents, at least, ye will not grudge us to rest for ever side by side."

With these words, she drew the blade from her lover's wound and plunged it, still warm, into her own heart. Thus were they found locked together and the gods moved their parents to grant Thisbe's last prayer. They lay side by side on the same funeral pyre and their ashes were mingled in the same urn.

25. BAUCIS AND PHILEMON.

One evening, in times long ago, old Philemon and his wife Baucis sat at their cottage door enjoying the calm and beautiful sunset. They had already eaten their frugal supper, and intended now to spend a quiet hour or two before

bed-time. So they talked together about their garden, and their cow, and their bees, and their grape-vine which clambered over the cottage wall, and on which the grapes were beginning to turn purple. But the rude shouts of children and the fierce barking of dogs in the village near at hand grew louder and louder, until, at last, it was hardly possible for Baucis and Philemon to hear each other speak.

"Ah, wife," cried Philemon. "I fear some poor traveller is seeking hospitality among our neighbours yonder, and, instead of giving him food and lodging, they have set their dogs at him, as their custom is!"

"Well-a-day!" answered old Baucis, "I do wish our neighbours felt a little more kindness for their fellow-creatures. And only think of bringing up their children in this naughty way, and patting them on the head when they fling stones at strangers!"

"To tell you the truth, wife," said Philemon, shaking his white head, "I should not wonder if some terrible thing were to happen to all the people in the village, unless they mend their manners. But as far you and I are concerned, as long as Providence affords us a crust of bread, let us be ready to give half to any poor homeless stranger that may come along and need it."

"That's right, husband!" said Baucis, "So we will!"

These folks were quite poor, and had to work pretty hard for a living. Old Philemon toiled diligently in his garden, while Baucis was always busy with her distaff, or making a little butter and cheese with their cow's milk, or doing one thing and another about the cottage. Their food was seldom anything but bread, milk and vegetables, with sometimes a portion of honey from their bee-hive, and, now and then, a bunch of grapes, that had ripened against the cottage wall.

But they were two of the kindest people in the world, and would cheerfully have gone without their dinners any day rather than refuse a slice of their brown loaf, a cup of new milk, and a spoonful of honey to the weary traveller who might pause before their door. They felt as if such guests had a sort of holiness, and that they ought, therefore, to treat them better and more bountifully than their own selves.

Their cottage stood on a rising piece of ground at some short distance from a village, which lay in a hollow valley that was about half a mile in breadth. This valley, in past ages, when the world was new, had probably been the bed of a lake. There, fishes had glided to and fro in the depths, and waterweeds had grown along the margin, and trees and hills had seen their reflected images in the broad and peaceful mirror. But as the waters subsided men had cultivated the soil, and built houses on it, so that it was now a fertile spot, and bore no traces of the ancient lake, except a very small brook which meandered through the midst of the village, and supplied the inhabitants with water. The valley had been dry land so long that oaks had sprung up, and grown very high, and perished with old age, and been succeeded by others as tall and stately as the first. Never was there a prettier or more fruitful valley. The very sight of the plenty around them should have made the inhabitants kind and gentle, and ready to show their gratitude to Providence by doing good to their fellow-creatures.

But the people of this lovely village were not worthy to dwell in a spot on which Heaven had smiled so beneficently. They were a very selfish and hard-hearted people, and had no pity for the poor, nor sympathy for the homeless. They would only have laughed had anybody told them that human beings owe a debt of love to one another, because there is no other method of paying the debt of love

and care which all of us owe to Providence. They taught their children to be no better than themselves, and used to clap their hands by way of encouragement when they saw the little boys and girls run after some poor stranger, shouting at his heels and pelting him with stones. They kept large and fierce dogs, and whenever a traveller ventured to show himself in the village street, this pack of disagreeable curs scampered to meet him, barking, snarling, and showing their teeth. They then would seize him by his leg, or by his clothes, just as it happened; and if he were ragged when he came, he was generally a pitiable object before he had time to run away.

So now you can understand why old Philemon spoke so sorrowfully when he heard the shouts of the children and the barking of the dogs at the farther extremity of the village street. There was a confused din which lasted a good while, and seemed to pass quite through the breadth of the valley.

"I never heard the dogs so loud!" observed the good old man.

"Nor the children so rude!" answered the good old wife.

They sat shaking their heads one to another, while the noise came nearer and nearer, until, at the foot of the little eminence on which their cottage stood, they saw two travellers approaching on foot. Close behind them came the fierce dogs, snarling at their very heels. A little farther off, ran a crowd of children who sent up shrill cries, and flung stones at the two strangers with all their might. Once or twice, the younger of the two men, (he was a slender and very active figure), turned about and drove back the dogs with a staff which he carried in his hand. His companion, who was a very tall person, walked calmly along, as if

disdaining to notice either the naughty children or the pack of curs whose manners the children seemed to imitate.

Both of the travellers were very humbly clad, and looked as if they might not have money enough in their pockets to pay for a night's lodging. And this, I am afraid, was reason why the villagers had allowed their children and dogs to treat them so rudely.

"Come, wife," said Philemon to Baucis, "let us go and meet these poor people. No doubt they feel almost too heavy-hearted to climb the hill."

"Go you and meet them" answered Baucis, "while I make haste within door, and see whether we can get them anything for supper. A comfortable bowl of bread-and-milk would do wonders towards raising their spirits."

Accordingly she hastened into the cottage. Philemon, on his part, went forward, and extended his hand with so hospitable an aspect that there was no need of saying, what nevertheless he did say, in the heartiest tone imaginable :

"Welcome, strangers, welcome !"

"Thank you !" replied the younger of the two, in a lively kind of way, notwithstanding his weariness and trouble. "This is quite another greeting than we have met with yonder in the village. Pray, why do you live in such a bad neighbourhood ?"

"Ah !", observed old Philemon, with a quiet and benign smile, "Providence put me here. I hope, among other reasons, in order that I may make you what amends I can, for the inhospitality of my neighbours."

"Well said, old father !" cried the traveller, laughing : "and if the truth must be told, my companion and myself need some amends. Those children have bespattered us finely with their mud-balls, and one of the curs has torn

my cloak, which was ragged enough already. But I took him across the muzzle with my staff, and I think you may have heard him yelp even thus far off."

Philemon was glad to see him in such good spirits ; nor, indeed, would you have fancied, by the traveller's look and manner, that he was weary with a long day's journey, besides being disheartened by rough treatment at the end of it. He was dressed in rather an odd way, with a sort of cap on his head, the brim of which stuck out over both ears. Though it was a summer evening, he wore a cloak which he kept wrapped closely about him, perhaps, because his under-garments were shabby. Philemon perceived, too, that he had on a singular pair of shoes ; but as it was now growing dusk, and as the old man's eyesight was none the sharpest, he could not precisely tell in what the strangeness consisted. One thing, certainly, seemed queer. The traveller was so wonderfully light and active that it appeared as if his feet sometimes rose from the ground of their own accord, or could only be kept down by an effort.

"I used to be light-footed in my youth," said Philemon to the traveller, "but I always found my feet grow heavier towards nightfall."

"There is nothing like a good staff to help me along," answered the stranger ; "and I happen to have an excellent one, as you can see."

This staff, in fact, was the oddest-looking staff that Philemon had ever beheld. It was made of olive-wood, and had something like a little pair of wings near the top. Two snakes, carved in the wood, were represented as twining themselves about the staff, and were so very skilfully executed that old Philemon almost thought them alive, and that he could see them wriggling and twisting.

"A curious piece of work, sure enough!" said he. "A staff with wings! It would be an excellent kind of stick for a little boy to ride astride of!"

By this time Philemon and his two guests had reached the cottage door.

"Friends," said the old man, "sit down and rest yourselves here on this bench. My good wife, Baucis, has gone to see what you can have for supper. We are poor folks, but you shall be welcome to whatever we have in the cupboard."

The young stranger threw himself carelessly on the bench, letting his staff fall as he did so. And here happened something rather marvellous, though trifling enough too. The staff seemed to get up from the ground of its own accord, and, spreading its little pair of wings, it half-hopped, half-flew, and leaned itself against the wall of the cottage. There it stood quite still, except that the snakes continued to wriggle.

Before Philemon could ask any questions, the elder stranger drew his attention from the wonderful staff by speaking to him.

"Was there not," asked the stranger in a remarkably deep tone of voice, "a lake, in very ancient times, covering the spot where now stands yonder village?"

"Not in my day, friend," answered Philemon: "and yet I am an old man, as you see. There were always the fields and meadows, just as they are now, and the old trees, and the little stream murmuring through the midst of the valley. My father, nor his father before him, ever saw it otherwise, so far as I know; and doubtless it will still be the same when old Philemon shall be gone and forgotten!"

"That is more than can be safely foretold," observed the stranger: and there was something very stern in his deep voice. He shook his head, too, so that his dark and heavy curls were shaken with the movement. "Since the inhabitants of yonder village have forgotten the affections and sympathies of their nature, it were better that the lake should be rippling over their dwellings again!"

The traveller looked so stern, that Philemon was really almost frightened the more so that at his frown the twilight seemed suddenly to grow darker, and that when he shook his head, there was a roll as of thunder in the air.

But a moment afterwards, the stranger's face became so kindly and mild that the old man quite forgot his terror. Nevertheless he could not help feeling that this elder traveller must be no ordinary personage, although he happened now to be attired so humbly, and to be journeying on foot. Not that Philemon fancied him a prince in disguise, or any character of that sort; but rather some exceedingly wise man, who went about the world in this poor garb, despising wealth and all worldly objects, and seeking everywhere to add a mite to his wisdom. This idea appeared the more probable, because, when Philemon raised his eyes to the stranger's face he seemed to see more thought there, in one look, than he could have studied in a lifetime.

While Baucis was getting the supper, the travellers both began to talk very sociably with Philemon. The younger, indeed, was extremely lively and made such shrewd and witty remarks that the good old man continually burst out a laughing, and pronounced him the merriest fellow whom he had seen for many a day.

"Pray, my young friend," said he as they grew familiar together, "what may your name be?"

"Why, I am very nimble, as you see" answered the traveller. "So if you call me Hermes, the name will fit tolerably well."

"Hermes, Hermes?" repeated Philemon, looking in the traveller's face to see if he were making fun of him. "It is a very odd name? And your companion there, has he as strange a one?"

"You must ask the thunder to tell it you!" replied Hermes putting on a mysterious look. "No other voice is loud enough."

This remark, whether it were serious or in jest, might have caused Philemon to conceive a very great awe of the elder stranger if, on venturing to gaze at him, he had not beheld so much beneficence in his visage. But, undoubtedly, here was the grandest figure that ever sat beside a cottage door. When the stranger conversed, it was with gravity, and in such a way that Philemon felt irresistibly moved to tell him everything which he had most at heart. This is always the feeling that people have, when they meet with any one wise enough to comprehend all their good and evil, and to despise not a little of it.

But Philemon, simple and kind-hearted old man that he was, had not many secrets to disclose. He talked, however, quite garrulously about the events of his past life, in the whole course of which, he had never been a score of miles from this very spot. His wife Baucis and himself had dwelt in the cottage from their youth upward, earning their bread by honest labour, always poor, but still contented. He told what excellent butter and cheese Baucis made, and how nice were the vegetables which he raised in his garden. He said, too, that because they loved one another so very much, it was the wish of both that death might not separate them but that they should die, as they had lived, together.

As the stranger listened, a smile beamed over his countenance and made its expression very sweet.

"You are a good old man," said he to Philemon, "and you have a good old wife to be your help-meet. It is fit that your wish be granted."

And it seemed to Philemon just then as if the sunset clouds threw up a bright flash from the west, and kindled a sudden light in the sky.

Baucis had now got supper ready, and, coming to the door, began to make apologies for the poor fare which she was forced to set before her guests.

"Had we known you were coming," said she, "my goodman and myself would have gone without a morsel, rather than you should lack a better supper. But I took the most part of to-day's milk to make cheese; and our last loaf is already half-eaten. Ah me! I never feel the sorrow of being poor save when a poor traveller knocks at our door."

"All will be very well; do not trouble yourself, my good dame," replied the elder stranger kindly. "An honest, hearty welcome to a guest works miracles with the fare, and is capable of turning the coarsest food to nectar and ambrosia."

"A welcome you shall have," cried Baucis, "and likewise a little honey that we happen to have kept; and a bunch of purple grapes besides."

"Why, Mother Baucis, it is a feast!," exclaimed Hermes, laughing, "an absolute feast! and you shall see how bravely I will play my part at it! I think I never felt hungrier in my life."

Hermes's staff, you recollect, had set itself up against the wall of the cottage. Well, when its master entered the door, leaving this wonderful staff behind, what should it

do, but immediately spread its little wings, and go hopping and fluttering up the door-steps ! Tap, tap, went the staff on the kitchen floor ; nor did it rest until it had stood itself on end, with the greatest gravity and decorum, besides Hermes's chair. Old Philemon, however, as well as his wife, was so taken up in attending to their guests that no notice was given to what the staff had been about.

As Baucis had said, there was but a scanty supper for two hungry travellers. In the middle of the table was the remnant of a brown loaf, with a piece of cheese on one side of it and a dish of honey-comb on the other. There was a pretty good bunch of grapes for each of the guests. A moderately-sized earthen pitcher, nearly full of milk, stood at a corner of the board ; and when Baucis had filled two bowls, and set them before the strangers, only a little milk remained in the bottom of the pitcher. Alas ! it is a very sad business when the bountiful heart finds itself pinched and squeezed among narrow circumstances. Poor Baucis kept wishing that she might starve for a week to come, if it were possible by so doing to provide these hungry folks with a more plentiful supper.

And, since the supper was so exceedingly small, she could not help wishing that their appetites had not been quite so large. Why at their very first sitting down, the travellers both drank off all the milk in their two bowls at a draught.

"A little more milk, kind Mother Baucis, if you please," said Hermes. "The day has been hot, and I am very much athirst."

"Now my dear people, answered Baucis in great confusion," I am so sorry and ashamed ! But the truth is, there is hardly a drop more milk in the pitcher. O husband, husband ! why didn't we go without our supper ?"

"Why, it appears to me," said Hermes, starting up from table and taking the pitcher by the handle, "it really appears to me that matters are not quite so bad as you represent them. Here is certainly more milk in the pitcher."

So saying, and to the vast astonishment of Baucis, he proceeded to fill, not only his own bowl, but his companion's likewise, from the pitcher that was supposed to be almost empty. The good woman could scarcely believe her eyes. She had certainly poured out nearly all the milk, and had peeped in afterwards and seen the bottom of the pitcher as she set it down upon the table.

"But I am old," thought Baucis to herself, "and apt to be forgetful. I suppose I must have made a mistake. At all events, the pitcher cannot help being empty now, after filling the bowls twice over."

"Why what excellent milk!", observed Hermes, after quaffing the contents of the second bowl, "Excuse me, my kind hostess, but I must really ask you for a little more."

Now Baucis had seen, as plainly as she could see anything, that Hermes had turned the pitcher upside down, and consequently had poured out every drop of milk in filling the last bowl. Of course there could not possibly be any left. However, in order to let him know precisely how the case was, she lifted the pitcher, and made a gesture as if pouring milk into Hermes's bowl, but without the remotest idea that any milk would stream forth. What was her surprise, therefore, when such an abundant cascade fell bubbling into the bowl that it was immediately filled to the brim and overflowed upon the table! The two snakes that were twisted about Hermes' staff (but neither Baucis nor Philemon happened to observe this circumstance) stretched out their heads and began to lap up the spilt milk.

And then what a delicious fragrance the milk had ! It seemed as if Philemon's only cow must have pastured that day on the richest herbage that could be found anywhere in the world.

" And now a slice of your brown loaf, Mother Baucis," said Hermes, " and a little of that honey ! "

Baucis cut him a slice accordingly ; and though the loaf, when she and her husband ate of it, had been rather too dry and crusty to be palatable, it was now as light and moist, as if but a few hours out of the oven. Tasting a crumb which had fallen on the table, she found it more delicious than bread ever was before, and could hardly believe that it was a loaf of her own kneading and baking. Yet what other loaf could it possibly be ?

But oh, the honey ! I may just as well let it alone without trying to describe how exquisitely it smelt and looked.

Although good Mother Baucis was a simple, old dame, she could not but think that there was something rather out of the common way in all that had been going on. So after helping the guests to bread and honey, and laying a bunch of grapes by each of their plates, she sat down by Philemon, and told him what she had seen, in a whisper.

" Did you ever hear the like ? " asked she.

" No, I never did," answered Philemon with a smile. " And I rather think, my dear old wife, you have been walking about in a sort of dream. If I had poured out the milk, I should have seen through the business at once. There happened to be a little more in the pitcher than you thought that is all."

" Ah, husband " said Baucis, " say what you will, these are very uncommon people ! "

" Well, well," replied Philemon, still smiling, " perhaps they are. They certainly do look as if they had seen better

days ; and I am heartily glad to see them making so comfortable a supper."

Each of the guests had now taken his bunch of grapes upon his plate. Baucis (who rubbed her eyes in order to see the more clearly) was of opinion that the clusters had grown larger and richer, and that each separate grape seemed to be on the point of bursting with ripe juice. It was entirely a mystery to her how such grapes could ever have been produced from the old stunted vines that climbed against the cottage wall.

"Very admirable grapes these!" observed Hermes, as he swallowed one after another, without apparently diminishing his cluster. "Pray, my good host, whence did you gather them?"

"From my own vine," answered Philemon. "You may see one of its branches twisting across the window yonder. But wife and I never thought the grapes very fine ones."

"I never tasted better," said the guest. "Another cup of this delicious milk, if you please, and I shall then have supped better than a prince."

This time old Philemon bestirred himself, and took up the pitcher ; for he was curious to discover whether there was any reality in the marvels which Baucis had whispered to him. He knew that his good old wife was incapable of falsehood, and that she was seldom mistaken in what she supposed to be true ; but this was so very singular a case that he wanted to see into it with his own eyes. On taking up the pitcher, therefore, he slyly peeped into it, and was fully satisfied that it contained not so much as a single drop. All at once, however, he beheld a little white fountain, which gushed up from the bottom of the pitcher, and speedily filled it to the brim with foaming and deliciously fragrant milk. It was lucky that Philemon, in his

surprise, did not drop the miraculous pitcher from his hand.

"Who are ye, wonder-working strangers?" cried he, even more bewildered than his wife had been.

"Your guest, my good Philemon, and your friends," replied the elder traveller in his mild, deep voice, that had something at once sweet and awe-inspiring in it. "Give me likewise a cup of the milk; and may your pitcher never be empty for kind Baucis and yourself, any more than for the needy way-farer!"

The supper being now over, the strangers requested to be shown to their place of repose. The old people would gladly have talked with them a little longer, and have expressed the wonder which they felt, and their delight at finding the poor and meagre supper prove so much better and more abundant than they hoped, but the elder traveller had inspired them with such reverence that they dared not ask him any questions. And when Philemon drew Hermes aside, and enquired how under the sun a fountain of milk could have got into an old earthen pitcher, this latter personage pointed to his staff.

"There is the whole mystery of the affair," quoth Hermes; "and if you can make it out, I'll thank you to let me know. I can't tell what to make of my staff. It is always playing such odd tricks as this — sometimes getting me a supper, and quite as often stealing it away. If I had any faith in such nonsense, I should say the stick was bewitched!"

He said no more, but looked so slyly in their faces that they rather fancied he was laughing at them. The magic staff went hopping at his heels as Hermes quitted the room. When left alone, the good old couple spent some little time in conversation about the events of the evening,

and then lay down on the floor and fell fast asleep. They had given up their sleeping-room to the guests and had no other bed for themselves save these planks, which I wish had been as soft as their own hearts.

The old man and his wife were stirring betimes in the morning and the strangers likewise arose with the sun, and made their preparations to depart. Philemon hospitably entreated them to remain a little longer, until Baucis could milk the cow and bake a cake upon the hearth, and perhaps find them a few fresh eggs for breakfast. The guests, however, seemed to think it better to accomplish a good part of their journey before the heat of the day should come on. They therefore persisted in setting out immediately, but asked Philemon and Baucis to walk forth with them a short distance, and show them the road which they were to take.

"Ah me! well-a-day!" exclaimed Philemon, when they had walked a little way from their door, "if our neighbours only knew what a blessed thing it is to show hospitality to strangers, they would tie up all their dogs, and never allow their children to fling another stone."

"It is a sin and shame for them to behave as they do!" cried good old Baucis vehemently, "And I mean to go this very day and tell some of them what naughty people they are."

"I fear," remarked Hermes, slyly smiling, "that you will find none of them at home."

The elder traveller's brow just then assumed such a grave, stern, and awful grandeur, yet serene withal, that neither Baucis nor Philemon dared to speak a word. They gazed reverently into his face as if they had been gazing at the sky.

"When men do not feel towards the humblest stranger as if he were a brother," said the traveller in tones so

deep that they sounded like those of an organ, "they are unworthy to exist on earth which was created as the abode of a great human brotherhood."

"And, by the bye, my dear old people," cried Hermes, with the liveliest look of fun and mischief in his eyes, "where is this same village that you talk about? On which side of us does it lie? Methinks I do not see it hereabouts."

Philemon and his wife trudged towards the valley, where at sunset, only the day before, they had seen the meadows, the houses, the gardens, the clumps of trees, the wide, green-margined street, with children playing in it, and all the tokens of business, enjoyment, and prosperity. But what was their astonishment!—there was no longer any appearance of a village! Even the fertile valley, in the hollow of which it lay, had ceased to have existence. In its stead, they beheld the broad blue surface of a lake, which filled the great basin of the valley from brim to brim, and reflected the surrounding hills in its bosom with as tranquil an image as if it had been there ever since the creation of the world. For an instant the lake remained perfectly smooth. Then a little breeze sprang up, and caused the water to dance, glitter, and sparkle in the early sunbeams, and to dash with a pleasant rippling murmur against the hither shore.

The lake seemed so strangely familiar that the old couple were greatly perplexed, and felt as if they could only have been dreaming about a village having lain there. But the next moment they remembered the vanished dwellings, and faces and characters of the inhabitants, far too distinctly for a dream. The village had been there yesterday, and now was gone.

"Alas!" cried these kind-hearted old people, "what has become of our poor neighbours?"

"They exist no longer as men and women," said the elder traveller in his grand and deep voice, while a roll of thunder seemed to echo it at a distance.

"And as for those foolish people," said Hermes with his mischievous smile, "they are all transformed to fishes. There needed but little change, for they were already a scaly set of rascals, and the coldest-blooded beings in existence. So, kind Mother Baucis, whenever you or your husband have an appetite for a dish of broiled trout, he can throw in a line and pull out half a dozen of your old neighbours!"

"Ah," cried Baucis, shuddering, "I would not for the world put one of them on the gridiron!"

"No" added Philemon, making a wry face, "we could never relish them!"

"As for you, good Philemon," continued the elder traveller, "and you, kind Baucis, you, with your scanty means, have mingled so much heart-felt hospitality with your entertainment of the homeless stranger that the milk became an inexhaustible fount of nectar, and the brown loaf and the honey were ambrosia. Thus the divinities have feasted at your board off the same viands that supply their banquets on Olympus. You have done well, my dear old friends; therefore request whatever favour you have most at heart; and it is granted.

Philemon and Baucis looked at one another, and then—I know not which of the two it was who spoke, but that one uttered the desire of both their hearts.

"Let us live together while we live, and leave the world at the same instant when we die, for we have always loved one another!"

"Be it so!" replied stranger with majestic kindness. "Now look towards your cottage!"

They did so. But what was their surprise on beholding a tall edifice of white marble, with a wide-open portal, occupying the spot where their humble residence had so lately stood!

"There is your home," said the stranger, beneficently smiling on them both. "Exercise your hospitality in yonder palace as freely as in the poor hovel to which you welcomed us last evening."

The old folks fell on their knees to thank him, but, behold! neither he nor Hermes were there.

So Philemon and Baucis took up their residence in the marble palace, and spent their time, with vast satisfaction to themselves, in making everybody who happened to pass that way comfortable. The milk-pitcher, I must not forget to say, retained its marvellous quality of being never empty when it was desirable to have it full. Whenever an honest, good-humoured, and free-hearted guest took a draught from this pitcher, he invariably found it the sweetest and most invigorating fluid that ever ran down his throat. But if a cross and disagreeable curmudgeon happened to sip, he was pretty certain to twist his visage into a hard knot, and pronounce it a pitcher of sour milk!

Thus the old couple lived in their palace a great, great while, and grew older and older, and very old indeed. At length, however, there came a summer morning when Philemon and Baucis failed to make their appearance, as on other mornings, with one hospitable smile overspreading both their pleasant faces, to invite the guests of overnight to breakfast. The guests searched everywhere from top to bottom of the spacious palace, and all to no purpose. But, after a great deal of perplexity, they espied in front of the portal two venerable trees, which nobody could remember to have seen there the day before. Yet there

they stood, with their roots fastened deep into the soil, and a huge breadth of foliage overshadowing the whole front of the edifice. One was an oak and the other a lime-tree. Their boughs—it was strange and beautiful to see,—were intertwined together, and embraced one another, so that each tree seemed to live in the other tree's bosom much more than in its own.

While the guests were marvelling how these trees, that must have required at least a century to grow, could have come to be so tall and venerable in a single night, a breeze sprang up and set their intermingled boughs astir. And then there was a deep, broad murmur in the air, as if the two mysterious trees were speaking.

“I am old Philemon!” murmured the oak.

“I am old Baucis!” murmured the lime-tree.

But as the breeze grew stronger, the trees both spoke at once; Philemon! Baucis! Baucis!”—as if one were both and both were one, and talking together in the depths of their mutual heart. It was plain enough to perceive that the good old couple had renewed their youth, and were now to spend a quiet and delightful hundred years or so, Philemon as an oak and Baucis as a lime-tree. And oh, what a hospitable shade did they fling around them! Whenever a wayfarer paused beneath it, he heard a pleasant whisper of the leaves above his head, and wondered how the sound should so much resemble words like these:

“Welcome, welcome, dear traveller, welcome!”

And some kind soul, that knew what would have pleased old Baucis and old Philemon best, built a circular seat around both their trunks, where, for a great while afterwards, the weary and the hungry and the thirsty used to repose themselves and quaff milk abundantly out of the miraculous pitcher.

26. PROSERPINA AND PLUTO.

Mother Ceres was exceedingly fond of her daughter Proserpina, and seldom let her go alone into the fields. But just at the time when my story begins, the good lady was very busy, because she had the care of the crops of every kind, all over the earth ; and as the season had, thus far, been uncommonly backward, it was necessary to make the harvest ripen more speedily than usual. So she put on her turban, made of poppies (a kind of flower which she was always noted for wearing), and got into her car drawn by a pair of winged dragons, and was just ready to set off.

"Dear Mother," said Proserpina, "I shall be very lonely while you are away. May I not run down to the shore, and ask some of the sea-nymphs to play with me?"

"Yes, child," answered Mother Ceres. "The sea-nymphs are good creatures, and will never lead you into any harm. But you must take care not to stray away from them, nor go wandering about the fields by yourself."

The child promised to be prudent and by the time the winged dragons had whirled the car out of sight, she was already on the shore, calling to the sea-nymphs to come and play with her. They knew Proserpina's voice, and were not long in showing their glistening faces and sea-green hair above the water, at the bottom of which was their home. They brought along with them a great many beautiful shells ; and sitting down on the moist sand, where the surf waves broke over them, they busied themselves in making necklaces, which they hung round Proserpina's neck. By way of showing her gratitude, the child besought them to go with her a little way into the fields, so that they might gather abundance of flowers, with which she would make each of her kind playmates a wreath.

"Oh no, dear Proserpina!" cried the sea-nymphs; "we dare not go with you upon the dry land. We are apt to grow faint unless at every breath we can snuff up the salt breeze of the ocean."

"It is a great pity," said Proserpina. "But do you wait for me here, and I will run and gather my apron full of flowers, and be back again before the surf wave has broken ten times over you. I long to make you some wreaths that shall be as lovely as this necklace of many-coloured shells."

"We will wait, then," answered the sea-nymphs. "But while you are gone, we may as well lie down on a bank of soft sponge, under the water. But we will pop up our heads every few minutes to see if you are coming."

The young Proserpina ran quickly to a spot where, only the day before, she had seen a great many flowers. These, however, were now a little past their bloom; and, wishing to give her friends the freshest and loveliest blossoms, she strayed further into the fields, and found some that made her scream with delight. Never had she met with such exquisite flowers before,—violets so large and fragrant,—roses with so rich and delicate a blush—such superb hyacinths,—and many others, some of which seemed to be of new shapes and colours. Two or three times, moreover, she could not help thinking that a tuft of most splendid flowers had suddenly sprouted out of the earth before her very eyes, as if on purpose to tempt her a few steps further. Proserpina's apron was soon filled and brimming over with delightful blossoms. She was on the point of turning back in order to rejoin the sea-nymphs, and sit with them on the moist sands, all twining wreaths together. But, a little further on, what should she behold?—it was a large shrub, completely covered with the most magnificent flowers in the world.

Holding up her apron full of flowers with her left hand, Proserpina seized the large shrub with the other, and pulled and pulled, but was hardly able to loosen the soil about its roots. What a deep-rooted plant it was ! Again the girl pulled with all her might, and observed that the earth began to stir and crack to some distance around the stem. She gave another pull, but relaxed her hold, fancying that there was a rumbling sound right beneath her feet.—Did the roots extend into some enchanted cave ? Then laughing at herself for so childish a notion, she made another effort ; up came the shrub, and Proserpina staggered back, holding the stem—triumphantly in her hand, and gazing at the deep hole which its roots had left in the soil.

Much to her astonishment, this hole kept spreading wider and wider, and growing deeper and deeper, until it really seemed to have no bottom ; and all the while there came a rumbling noise out of its depths, louder and louder, and nearer and nearer, and sounding like the tramp of horses' hoofs and the rattling of wheels. Too frightened to run away, she stood straining her eyes into this wonderful cavity, and soon saw a team of four sable horses, snorting smoke out of their nostrils, and tearing their way out of the earth with a splendid golden chariot whirling at their heels. They leaped out of the bottomless hole, chariot and all ; and there they were, tossing their black manes, flourishing their black tails, and curvetting with every one of their hoofs off the ground at once, close by the spot where Proserpina stood. In the chariot sat the figure of a man, richly dressed, with a crown on his head, all flaming with diamonds. He was of noble aspect, and rather handsome, but looked sullen and discontented ; and he kept rubbing his eyes, and shading them with his hand, as if he did not live enough in the sunshine to be very fond of its light.

As soon as this personage saw the affrighted Proserpina, he beckoned her to come a little nearer.

"Do not be afraid," said he, with as cheerful a smile as he knew how to put on. "Come, would not you like to ride a little way with me in my beautiful chariot?"

But Proserpina was so alarmed that she wished for nothing but to get out of his reach. And no wonder! The stranger did not look remarkably good-natured, in spite of his smile; and as for his voice, its tones were deep and stern, and sounded as much like the rumbling of an earthquake underground as anything else.

"Mother, Mother Ceres," cried she, all in a tremble, "come quickly and save me!"

But her voice was too faint for her mother to hear. Nor could it have availed her poor daughter even had she been within hearing; for no sooner did Proserpina begin to cry out, than the stranger leaped to the ground, caught the child in his arms and again mounting the chariot, shook the reins, and shouted to the four black horses to set off. They immediately broke into so swift a gallop that it seemed rather like flying through the air than running along the earth. In a moment Proserpina lost sight of the pleasant vale of Enna, in which she had always dwelt. Another instant, and even the summit of Mount *Ætna* had become so blue in the distance that she could scarcely distinguish it from the smoke that gushed out of its crater. But still the poor child screamed, and scattered her apron full of flowers along the way, and left a long wail trailing behind the chariot. But Mother Ceres was a great way off, and could not hear the cry.

As they rode on, the stranger did his best to soothe her.

"Why should you be so frightened, my pretty child?" said he trying to soften his rough voice. "I promise not to do you any harm."

"Let me go home!" cried Proserpina,— "let me go home!"

"My home is better than your mother's," answered King Pluto. "It is a palace all made of gold, with crystal windows; and because there is little or no sunshine thereabouts, the apartments are illuminated with diamond lamps. You never saw anything half so magnificent as my throne. If you like, you may sit down on it, and be my little queen and I will sit on the footstool."

"I don't care for golden palaces and thrones," sobbed Proserpina, "O my mother, my mother! Carry me back to my mother!"

But King Pluto, as he called himself, only shouted to his steeds to go faster.

"Pray do not be foolish, Proserpina," said he, in rather a sullen tone, "I offer you my palace and my crown, and all the riches that are under the earth, and you treat me as if I were doing you an injury. Be cheerful and smile."

"Never!" answered Proserpina, looking as miserable as she could. "I shall never smile again till you set me down at my mother's door."

But she might just as well have talked to the wind that whistled past them; for Pluto urged on his horses, and went faster than ever. Proserpina continued to cry out, and screamed so long and so loudly that her poor little voice was almost screamed away; and when it was nothing but a whisper, she happened to cast her eyes over a great broad field of waving grain; and there was Mother Ceres, making the corn grow, and too busy to notice the golden

chariot as it went rattling along. The child mustered all her strength, and gave one more scream, but was out of sight before Ceres had time to turn her head.

King Pluto had taken a road which now began to grow excessively gloomy. It was bordered on each side with rocks and precipices, between which the rumbling of the chariot wheels was reverberated, with a noise like rolling thunder. The trees and bushes that grew in the crevices of the rocks had very dismal foliage; and, by and by, although it was hardly noon, the air became obscured with a grey twilight. The black horses had rushed along so swiftly that they were already beyond the limits of the sunshine. But the duskier it grew, the more did Pluto's visage assume an air of satisfaction. After all, he was not an ill-looking person, especially when he left off twisting his features into a smile that did not belong to them. Proserpina peeped at his face through the gathering dusk, and hoped that he might not be so very wicked as she at first thought him.

"Ah, this twilight is truly refreshing," said King Pluto, "after being so tormented with that ugly and impertinent glare of the sun. How much more agreeable is lamp-light or torchlight, more particularly when reflected from diamonds! It will be a magnificent sight when we get to my palace."

"Is it much farther?" asked Proserpina. "And will you carry me back when I have seen it?"

"We will talk of that by and by," answered Pluto. "We are just entering my dominions. Do you see that tall gateway before us? When we pass those gates we are at home. And there lies my faithful mastiff at the threshold. Cerberus! Cerberus! Come hither, my good dog!"

So saying, Pluto pulled at the reins, and stopped the chariot right between the tall massive pillars of the gateway. The mastiff, of which he had spoken, got up from the threshold, and stood on his hind legs, so as to put his fore-paws on the chariot-wheel. But, what a strange dog he was! He was a big, rough, ugly-looking monster, with three separate heads, and each of them fiercer than the two others; but fierce as they were, King Pluto patted them all. He seemed very fond of his three-headed dog. Cerberus, on the other hand, was evidently rejoiced to see his master, and expressed his attachment, as other dogs do, by wagging his tail at a great rate. Proserpina's eyes being drawn to it by its brisk motion, she saw that this tail was neither more nor less than a live dragon, with fiery eyes, and fangs that had a very poisonous aspect. And while the three-headed Cerberus was fawning so lovingly on King Pluto, there was the dragon tail wagging against its will, and looking as cross and ill-natured as you can imagine, on its own separate account.

"Will the dog bite me?" asked Proserpina, edging closer to Pluto. "What an ugly creature he is!"

"Oh, never fear," answered her companion. "He never harms people unless they try to enter my dominions without being sent for or to get away when I wish to keep them here. Down, Cerberus! now, my pretty Proserpina, we will drive on."

On went the chariot, and King Pluto seemed greatly pleased to find himself once more in his own kingdom. He drew Proserpina's attention to the rich veins of gold that were to be seen among the rocks, and pointed to several places where one stroke of the pickaxe would loosen a bushel of diamonds. All along the road, indeed, there were sparkling gems, which would have been of inestimable value above ground, but which, here, were reckoned of the more common sort, and hardly worth a beggar's stooping for.

He alighted from the chariot, and, taking Proserpina in his arms, carried her up a lofty flight of steps into the great hall of the palace. It was splendidly illuminated, by means of large precious stones of various hues, which seemed to burn like so many lamps, and glowed with a hundred-fold radiance all through the vast apartment. And yet there was a kind of gloom in the midst of this enchanted light; nor was there a single object in the hall that was really agreeable to behold, except the little Proserpina herself, a lovely child, with one earthly flower which she had not let fall from her hand. It is my opinion, that even King Pluto had never been happy in his palace, and that this was the true reason, why he had stolen away Proserpina, in order that he might have something to love, instead of cheating his heart any longer with this tiresome magnificence. And though he pretended to dislike the sunshine of the upper world, yet the effect of the child's presence, bedimmed as she was by her tears, was as if a faint and watery sunbeam had somehow or other found its way into the enchanted hall.

Pluto now summoned his domestics, and bade them lose no time in preparing a most sumptuous banquet, and, above all things, not to fail in setting a golden beaker of the water of Lethe by Proserpina's plate.

"I will neither drink that nor anything else," said Proserpina. "Nor will I taste a morsel of food, even if you keep me for ever in your palace."

"I should be sorry for that," replied King Pluto, patting her cheek; for he really wished to be kind, if he had only known how. "You are a spoiled child, I perceive, my little Proserpina; but when you see the nice things which my cook will make for you, your appetite will quickly come again."

Then, he gave strict orders that all sorts of delicacies, such as young people are usually fond of, should be set before Proserpina. He had a secret motive in this ; for you are to understand, it is a fixed law, that when persons are carried off to the land of magic, if they once taste any food there, they can never get back to their friends.

But my story must now clamber out of King Pluto's dominions, and see what Mother Ceres has been about since she was bereft of her daughter. We had a glimpse of her, as you remember, half-hidden among the waving grain, while the four black steeds were swiftly whirling along the chariot in which her beloved Proserpina was so unwillingly borne away. You recollect, too, the loud scream which Proserpina gave, just when the chariot was out of sight.

Of all the child's outcries, this last shriek was the only one that reached the ears of Mother Ceres. She had mistaken the rumbling of the chariot-wheels for a peal of thunder, and imagined that a shower was coming up and that it would assist her in making the corn grow. But, at the sound of Proserpina's shriek, she started, and looked about in every direction, not knowing whence it came, but feeling almost certain that it was her daughter's voice. It seemed so unaccountable, however, that the girl should have strayed over so many lands and seas which she herself could not have traversed without the aid of her winged dragons, that the good Ceres tried to believe that it must be the child of some other parent, and not her own darling Proserpina, who had uttered this lamentable cry. Nevertheless it troubled her with many tender fears. So she quickly left the field in which she had been so busy ; and as her work was not half done, the grain looked next day as if it needed both sun and rain, and as if it were blighted in the ear, and had something the matter with its roots.

The pair of dragons must have had very nimble wings, for, in less than an hour, Mother Ceres had alighted at

the door of her home, and found it empty. Knowing, however, that the child was fond of sporting on the sea-shore, she hastened thither as fast as she could, and there beheld the wet faces of the poor nymphs peeping over a wave. All this while the good creatures had been waiting on the bank of sponge, and once every half-minute or so had popped up their fair heads above water, to see if their playmate were yet coming back. When they saw Mother Ceres, they sat down on the crest of the surf waves, and let it toss them ashore at her feet.

"Where is Proserpina?" cried Ceres. "Where is my child? Tell me, you naughty sea-nymphs, have you enticed her under the sea?"

"Oh no, good Mother Ceres," said the innocent sea-nymphs, tossing back their green ringlets and looking her in the face. "We never should dream of such a thing. Proserpina has been at play with us, it is true; but she left us a long while ago, meaning only to run a little way upon the dry land, and gather some flowers for a wreath. This was early in the day, and we have seen nothing of her since."

Ceres scarcely waited to hear what the nymphs had to say, before she hurried off to make enquiries all through the neighbourhood. But nobody told her anything that could enable the poor mother to guess what had become of Proserpina. A fisherman, it is true, had noticed her little footprints in the sand, as he went homeward along the beach with a basket of fish; a rustic had seen the child stooping to gather flowers; several persons had heard either the rattling of chariot-wheels or the rumbling of distant thunder; and one old woman had heard a scream, but supposed it to be some childish nonsense, and therefore did not take the trouble to look up. It took them such a tedious while to tell the nothing that they knew, that it

was dark night before Mother Ceres found out that she must seek her daughter elsewhere. So she lighted a torch and set forth, resolving never to come back until Proserpina was discovered.

In her haste and trouble of mind she quite forgot her car and the winged dragons; or, it may be, she thought that she could follow up the search more thoroughly on foot. At all events this was the way in which she began her sorrowful journey, holding her torch before her, and looking carefully at every object along the path. And as it happened, she had not gone far before she found one of the magnificent flowers which grew on the shrub that Proserpina had pulled up.

"Ha!" thought Mother Ceres, examining it by torch-light, "here is mischief in this flower! The earth did not produce it by any help of mine, nor of its own accord. It is the work of enchantment, and is therefore poisonous; and perhaps it has poisoned my poor child."

But she put the poisonous flower in her bosom, not knowing whether she might ever find any other memorial of Proserpina.

All night long she searched. But nobody has seen Proserpina, nor could give Mother Ceres the least hint which way to seek her. Thus passed the night; and still she continued her search, without sitting down to rest or stopping to take food.

And thus Mother Ceres went wandering about for nine long days and nights, finding no trace of Proserpina, unless it were now and then a withered flower; and these she picked up and put in her bosom, because she fancied that they might have fallen from her child's hand. All day she travelled onward through the hot sun; and at night again

the flame of the torch would redden and gleam along the pathway, and she continued her search by its light, without ever sitting down to rest.

On the tenth day she chanced to espy the mouth of a cavern, within which (though it was bright noon everywhere else), there would have been only a dusky twilight; but it so happened that a torch was burning there. It flickered, and struggled with the duskiness, but could not half light up the gloomy cavern with all its melancholy glimmer. Ceres was resolved to leave no spot without a search, so she peeped into the entrance of the cave, and lighted it up a little more by holding the torch before her. In so doing she caught a glimpse of what seemed to be a woman, sitting on the brown leaves of the last autumn, a great heap of which had been swept into the cave by the wind. This woman, (if woman it were), was by no means so beautiful as many of her sex; for her head, they tell me, was shaped very much like a dog's, and by way of ornament she wore a wreath of snakes around it. But Mother Ceres, the moment she saw her, knew that this was an odd kind of a person, who put all her enjoyment in being miserable, and never would have a word to say to other people, unless they were as melancholy and wretched as she herself delighted to be.

"I am wretched enough now," thought poor Ceres, "to talk with this melancholy Hecate, were she ten times sadder than ever she was."

So she stepped into the cave, and sat down on the withered leaves by the dog-headed woman's side. In all the world, since her daughter's loss, she had found no other companion.

"O Hecate," said she, "if ever you lose a daughter, you will know what sorrow is. Tell me, for pity's sake, have you seen my poor child Proserpina pass by the mouth of your cavern?"

"No" answered Hecate in a cracked voice, and sighing betwixt every word or two, "no, Mother Ceres, I have seen nothing of your daughter. But my ears, you must know, are made in such a way that all cries of distress and affright, all over the world, are pretty sure to find their way to them; and nine days ago, as I sat in my cave, making myself very miserable I heard the voice of a young girl shrieking as if in great distress. Something terrible has happened to the child, you may rest assured. As well as I could judge, a dragon, or some other cruel monster, was carrying her away."

"You kill me by saying so, cried Ceres, almost ready to faint. "Where was the sound, and which way did it seem to go?"

"It passed very swiftly along," said Hecate, "and at the same time there was a heavy rumbling of wheels towards the eastward. I can tell you nothing more, except that, in my honest opinion, you will never see your daughter again. The best advice I can give you is to take up your abode in this cavern, where we will be the two most wretched women in the world.

"Not yet, dark Hecate," replied Ceres. "But do you first come with your torch and help me to seek for my lost child. And when there shall be no more hope of finding her (if that black day is ordained to come) then, if you will give me room to fling myself down, either on these withered leaves or on the naked rock, I will show you what it is to be miserable. But until I know that she had perished from the face of the earth, I will not allow myself space even to grieve."

As the pair travelled along in this woebegone manner, a thought struck Ceres.

"There is one person," she exclaimed, "who must have seen my poor child, and can doubtless tell what has become of her. Why did not I think of him before? It is Phoebus."

Accordingly they went along in quest of Phoebus, both of them sighing grievously, and Hecate, to say the truth, making a great deal worse lamentation than Ceres ; for all the pleasure she had, you know, lay in being miserable, and therefore she made the most of it. By and by, after a pretty long journey, they arrived at the sunniest spot in the whole world. There they beheld a beautiful young man, with long curling ringlets, which seemed to be made of golden sunbeams ; his garments were like light summer clouds ; and the expression of his face was so exceedingly vivid that Hecate held her hand before her eyes, muttering that he ought to wear a black veil. Phoebus, (for this was the very person whom they were seeking), had a lyre in his hands, and was making its chords tremble with sweet music ; at the same time singing a most exquisite song, which he had recently composed. For, besides a great many other accomplishments, this young man was renowned for his admirable poetry.

As Ceres and her dismal companion approached him, Phoebus smiled on them so cheerfully that Hecate's wreath of snakes gave a spiteful hiss, and Hecate heartily wished herself back in her cave. But as for Ceres, she was too earnest in her grief either to know or care whether Phoebus smiled or frowned.

"Phoebus !", exclaimed she, "I am in great trouble, and have come to you for assistance. Can you tell me what has become of my dear child Proserpina ?"

"Proserpina ! Proserpina, did you call her name ?" answered Phoebus, endeavouring to recollect ; for there was such a continual flow of pleasant ideas in his mind, that he was apt to forget what had happened no longer ago than yesterday. "Ah, yes, I remember her now. A very lovely child, indeed ! I am happy to tell you, my dear lady, that I did see the little Proserpina not many

days ago. You may make yourself perfectly easy about her. She is safe, and in excellent hands."

"Oh, where is my dear child?" cried Ceres, clasping her hands and flinging herself at his feet.

"Why," said Phoebus, - and, as he spoke, he kept touching his lyre so as to make a thread of music run in and out among his words,—"as the little damsel was gathering flowers, she was suddenly snatched up by King Pluto, and carried off to his dominions. I recommend to you, my dear lady, to give yourself no uneasiness."

"Hush! Say not such a word!" answered Ceres indignantly. "What is there to gratify her heart? I must have her back again. Will you go with me, Phoebus, to demand my daughter of this wicked Pluto?"

"Pray excuse me," replied Phoebus with an elegant obeisance. "I certainly wish you success, and regret that my own affairs are so immediately pressing that I cannot have the pleasure of attending you. Besides, I am not upon the best of terms with King Pluto. To tell you the truth, his three-headed mastiff would never let me pass the gateway; for I should be compelled to take a sheaf of sunbeams along with me, and those, you know, are forbidden things in Pluto's kingdom."

"Ah, Phoebus," said Ceres, with bitter meaning in her words, "you have a harp instead of a heart. Farewell!"

Poor Mother Ceres! It is melancholy to think of her, pursuing her toilsome way all alone, and holding up that never dying torch, the fame of which seemed an emblem of the grief and hope that burned together in her heart. So much did she suffer, that though her aspect had been quite youthful when her troubles began, she grew to look like an elderly person in a very brief time. At length,

in her despair, she came to the dreadful resolution that not a stalk of grain nor a blade of grass, not a potato nor turnip, nor any other vegetable that was good for man or beast to eat, should be suffered to grow until her daughter were restored. She even forbade the flowers to bloom, lest somebody's heart should be cheered by their beauty.

Finally, as there seemed to be no other remedy, our old friend Hermes was sent post-haste to King Pluto, in hopes that he might be persuaded to undo the mischief he had done, and to set everything right again by giving up Proserpina. Hermes, accordingly, made the best of his way to the great gate, took a flying leap right over the three-headed mastiff, and stood at the door of the palace in an inconceivably short time. The servants knew him both by his face and garb ; for his short cloak, and his winged cap and shoes, and his snaky staff had often been seen thereabouts in times gone by. He requested to be shown immediately into the king's presence ; and Pluto, who heard his voice from the top of the stairs, and who loved to recreate himself with Hermes' merry talk, called out to him to come. And while they settle their business together, we must enquire what Proserpina has been doing ever since we saw her last.

The child had declared, as you may remember, that she would not taste a mouthful of food as long as she should be compelled to remain in King Pluto's palace. How she contrived to maintain her resolution, and at the same time to keep herself tolerably plump and rosy, is more than I can explain too. At any rate, it was now six months since she left the outside of the earth ; and not a morsel, so far as the attendants were able to testify, had yet passed between her teeth. This was the most creditable to Proserpina, inasmuch as King Pluto had caused her to be tempted day after day with all manner of sweetmeats, and richly preserved fruits, and delicacies of every sort, such as young

people are generally most fond of. But her good mother had often told her of the hurtfulness of these things; and for that reason alone, if there had been no other, she would have resolutely refused to taste them.

All this time, being a cheerful and active disposition, the little damsel was not quite so unhappy as you may have supposed. After Proserpina came, the palace was no longer the same abode of stately artifice and dismal magnificence that it had before been. The inhabitants all felt this, and King Pluto more than any of them.

"My own little Proserpina," he used to say, "I wish you could like me a little better. We gloomy and cloudy-natured persons have often as warm hearts at bottom as those of a more cheerful character. If you would only stay with me of your own accord, it would make me happier than the possession of a hundred such palaces as this."

"Ah," said Proserpina, "you should have tried to make me like you before carrying me off. And the best thing you can do now is to let me go again. Then I might remember you sometimes, and think that you were as kind as you knew how to be. Perhaps, too, one day or other, I might come back and pay you a visit."

"No, no," answered Pluto with his gloomy smile, "I will not trust you for that. You are too fond of living in the broad daylight, and gathering flowers. What an idle and childish taste that is! Are not these gems, which I have ordered to be dug for you, and which are richer than any in my crown—are they not prettier than a violet?"

"Not half so pretty," said Proserpina, snatching the gems from Pluto's hand and flinging them to the other end of the hall. "Oh, my sweet violets! Shall I never see you again?"

And then she burst into tears. But young people's tears have very little saltiness or acidity in them, and do not inflame the eyes so much as those of grown persons; so that it is not to be wondered at if, a few moments afterwards, Proserpina was sporting through the hall almost as merrily as she and the four sea-nymphs had sported along the edge of the surfwave. King Pluto gazed after her, and wished that he too was a child. And little Proserpina, when she turned about and beheld this great king standing in his splendid hall, and looking so grand, and so melancholy, and so lonesome, was smitten with a kind of pity. She ran back to him, and, for the first time in all her life, put her small soft hand in his.

"I love you a little," whispered she, looking up in his face.

"Do you indeed, my dear child?" cried Pluto, bending his dark face down to kiss her; but Proserpina shrank away from the kiss, for though his features were noble, they were very dusky and grim. "Well, I have not deserved it of you, after keeping you a prisoner for so many months, and starving you besides. Are you not terribly hungry? Is there nothing which I can get you to eat?"

In asking this question the king of the underworld had a very cunning purpose; for, you will recollect, if Proserpina tasted a morsel of food in his dominions, she would never afterwards be at liberty to quit them.

"No, indeed," said Proserpina. I have no appetite for anything in the world, unless it were a slice of bread of my mother's own baking, or a little fruit out of her garden."

When Pluto heard this, he began to see that he had mistaken the best method of tempting Proserpina to eat. The cook's made dishes and artificial dainties were not half so delicious, in the good child's opinion, as the simple

fare to which Mother Ceres had accustomed her. Wondering that he had never thought of it before, the king now sent one of his trusty attendants, with a large basket, to get some of the finest and juiciest pears, peaches and plums which could anywhere be found in the upper world. Unfortunately for him, however, this was during the time when Ceres had forbidden any fruits or vegetables to grow; and, after seeking all over the earth, King Pluto's servant found only a single pomegranate, and that so dried up as to be not worth eating. Nevertheless, since there was no better to be had, he brought this dry old withered pomegranate home to the palace, put it on a magnificent golden salver, and carried it up to Proserpina. Now it happened, curiously enough, that just as the servant was bringing the pomegranate into the back-door of the palace, our friend Hermes had gone up the front steps, on his errand to get Proserpina away from King Pluto.

As soon as Proserpina saw the pomegranate on the golden salver, she told the servant he had better take it away again.

"I shall not touch it, I assure you," said she. "If I were ever so hungry, I shall never think of eating such a miserable, dry pomegranate as that."

"It is the only one in the world," said the servant.

He set down the golden salver with the wizened pomegranate upon it, and left the room. When he was gone, Proserpina could not help coming close to the table and looking at this poor specimen of dried fruit with a great deal of eagerness; for, to say the truth, on seeing something that suited her taste, she felt all the six months' appetite taking possession of her at once. To be sure it was very wretched-looking pomegranate, and seemed to have no more juice in it than an oyster-shell. But there was no

choice of such things in King Pluto's palace. This was the first fruit she had seen there, and the last she was ever likely to see; and unless she ate it up immediately it would grow drier than it already was, and be wholly unfit to eat.

"At least I may smell it," thought Proserpina.

So she took up the pomegranate and applied it to her nose, and, somehow or other, being in such close neighbourhood to her mouth, the fruit found its way into that little red cave. Dear me! what an everlasting pity! Before Proserpina knew what she was about, her teeth had actually bitten it of their own accord. Just as this fatal deed was done, the door of the apartment opened, and in came King Pluto, followed by Hermes, who had been urging him to let his little prisoner go. At the first noise of their entrance. Proserpina withdrew the pomegranate from her mouth. But Hermes (whose eyes were very keen, and his wits the sharpest that ever anybody had) perceived that the child was a little confused; and, seeing the empty salver, he suspected that she had been taking a sly nibble of something or other. As for honest Pluto, he never guessed at the secret.

"My little Proserpina," said the king, sitting down, and affectionately drawing her between his knees, "here is Hermes, who tells me that a great many misfortunes have befallen innocent people on account of my detaining you in my dominions. To confess the truth, I myself had already reflected that it was an unjustifiable act to take you away from your good mother. But then you must consider, my dear child, that this vast palace is apt to be gloomy (although the precious stones certainly shine very brightly), and that I am not of the most cheerful disposition, and that therefore it was a natural thing enough to seek for the society of some merrier creatures than myself. I

hoped you would take my crown for a plaything, and me,—ah you laugh, naughty Proserpina :—me, grim, as I am, for a playmate. It was a silly expectation."

"Not so extremely silly," whispered Proserpina. "You have really amused me very much, sometimes."

"Thank you," said King Pluto, rather dryly. "But I can see plainly enough that you think my palace a dusky prison, and me the iron hearted keeper of it. And an iron heart I should surely have, if I could detain you here any longer, my poor child, when it is now six months since you tasted food. I give you your liberty. Go with Hermes. Hasten home to your dear mother."

Now, although you may not have supposed it, Proserpina found it impossible to take leave of poor King Pluto without some regrets and a good deal of compunction for not telling him about the pomegranate. She even shed a tear or two, thinking how lonely and cheerless the great palace would seem to him with all its ugly glare of artificial light, after she herself, his one little ray of natural sunshine, whom he had stolen, to be sure, but only because he valued her so much, after she should have departed. I know not how many kind things she might have said to the disconsolate king of the underworld had not Hermes hurried her away.

"Come along quickly," whispered he in her ear, "or his Majesty may change his royal mind. And take care, above all things, that you say nothing of what was brought you on the golden salver."

In a very short time they had passed the great gateway (leaving the three-headed Cerberus barking and yelping and growling with threefold din behind them), and emerged upon the surface of the earth. It was delightful to behold, as Proserpina hastened along, how the path grew verdant

behind and on either side of her. Wherever she set her blessed foot, there was at once a dewy flower.

Mother Ceres had returned to her deserted home, and was sitting disconsolately on the door-step, with her torch burning in her hand. She had been idly watching the flame for some moments past, when all at once it flickered and went out.

"What does this mean?" thought she. "It was an enchanted torch, and should have kept burning till my child came back.

Lifting her eyes, she was surprised to see a sudden verdure flashing over the brown and barren fields, exactly as you may have observed a golden hue gleaming far and wide across the landscape from the just risen sun.

"Does the earth disobey me?" exclaimed Mother Ceres indignantly. "Does it presume to be green when I have bidden it be barren until my daughter shall be restored to my arms?"

"Then open your arms, dear Mother," cried a well-known voice, "and take your little daughter into them."

And Proserpina came running and flung herself upon her mother bosom. Their mutual transport is not to be described. The grief of their separation had caused both of them to shed a great many tears, and now they shed a great many more, because their joy could not so well express itself in any other way.

When their hearts had grown a little more quiet, Mother Ceres looked anxiously at Proserpina.

"My child," said she, "did you taste any food while you were in King Pluto's palace?"

"Dearest Mother," answered Proserpina, "I will tell you the whole truth. Until this very morning not a morsel of food had passed my lips. But to-day they brought me

a pomegranate (a very dry one it was, and all shrivelled up, till there was little left of it but seeds and skin), and, having seen no fruit for so long a time, and being faint with hunger, I was tempted just to bite it. The instant I tasted it, King Pluto and Hermes came into the room I had not swallowed a morsel; but dear Mother, I hope it was no harm but six of the pomegranate seeds, I am afraid, remained in my mouth."

"Ah, unfortunate child, and miserable me!" exclaimed Ceres. "For each of those six pomegranate seeds you must spend one month of every year in King Pluto's palace. You are but half restored to your mother. Only six months with me, and six with that wicked King of Darkness!"

"Do not speak so harshly of poor King Pluto," said Proserpina kissing her mother. "He has some very good qualities; and I really think I can bear to spend six months in his palace, if he will only let me spend the other six with you. He certainly did very wrong to carry me off; but then, as he says, it was but a dismal sort of life for him, to live in that great gloomy palace all alone; and it has made a wonderful change in his spirits to have a little girl to run upstairs and down. There is some comfort in making him so happy, and so, upon the whole, dearest Mother, let us be thankful that he is not to keep me the whole year round."

NOTES ON THE DEITIES OF THE ANCIENTS MENTIONED IN THIS BOOK

Aeolus (ē-ō-lus) the god of storms and winds, who had his kingdom in Aeolia, the islands off the coast of Italy, now known as the Lipari Islands.

Aphrodite (af-ro-di-té) the Greek goddess of beauty and love (known to the Romans as Venus) She arose from the sea near the island of Cyprus, hence her name which means sea-foam. The rose, the myrtle, the dove and the swan were all sacred to her. She is generally represented with her son, Eros, on a chariot drawn by doves.

Apollo (apol-lo) usually called Phoebus Apollo or sometimes Helios. He is the god of heat and light and of the sun. Also the god of all fine arts, medicine, music, poetry, and eloquence. He is always represented as a tall, beardless young man of handsome appearance, holding in his hand a bow, or sometimes a lyre. His head is generally surrounded by beams of light. His most splendid temple was at Delphi, where all the world came to consult his Oracle.

Ares (ā-rēz) the Greek God of War, known to the Romans as Mars, worshipped more among them than among the Greeks.

Artemi (ar-tē-mis) See Diana.

Aurora (ōr-ōr-a) the goddess of the dawn, is generally depicted as drawn in a rose-coloured chariot, opening with her rosy fingers the gates of the East, pouring the dew upon the earth and making the flowers grow. Her chariot is drawn by white horses, and she is covered with a veil. Night and sleep flee before her. She always sets out before Helios, and is the forerunner of his rising.

Bacchus (bak-kūs)—known to the Greeks as Dionysus ; the god of wine, usually represented as crowned with vine and ivy leaves with a goblet in his hands. Around his shoulders is draped a panther skin. The vine is sacred to him.

Ceres (se-rez)—see Demeter.

Cupid (cū-pīd)—known to the Greeks as Eros was the son of Venus, and was the god of love. He is always represented as a naked infant, armed with a bow and arrows. Some of his arrows have golden points and whoever is struck by one of these, falls in love with the first person of the opposite sex seen. The remainder of his arrows are tipped with lead, and, whoever is struck by one of this group, remains indifferent to all the pleadings of love.

Demeter (dēm-ē-tēr)—the Roman goddess Ceres, was the goddess of corn and harvests. Her kindness to mankind made Ceres respected. Her favourite abode was in Sicily. She is represented with a garland of ears of corn about her head, holding in one hand a lighted torch and in the other, a poppy which was sacred to her.

Diana (di-an-a)—known to the Greeks as Artemis, was the twin sister of Apollo. She was the goddess of hunting. She is represented with a bent bow and quiver, and attended by dogs. She is also the goddess of the moon.

Dionysus (dī-ō-nī-sus)—See Bacchus.

Dis—the Greek God of the underworld. Identified with the Roman god Pluto, the god of the underworld, death, and funerals. Married by force, Proserpina, daughter of Ceres. He is generally represented as holding a trident with two teeth; he has also keys in his hand to intimate that whoever enters his kingdom, never returns.

Eros (e-ros) — see Cupid.

Hades (ha-déz)—the underworld. The realm of Dis Divided into several parts, the abode of the damned, the abode of the blest, and the abode of those who are temporarily expiating sins committed on earth.

Helios (he-li-os) —see Apollo.

Hera (he-ra)—also known to the Romans as Juno, was the wife of Zeus, and the Queen of Heaven. She was the goddess of power and riches; and is usually represented as sitting on a throne with a diadem on her head, and a golden sceptre in her hand. The peacock, her sacred bird, is shown beside her.

Hermes (her-mez) — sometimes called Mercury or Quicksilver. He was the son of Zeus and Maia and was the messenger of the gods. He had a winged cap, wings for his feet and an invincible sword. He had the power of becoming invisible at will.

Iris—the hand maiden of Hera. She is the same as the rainbow, and is depicted with wings, the colours of the rainbow. She appears sitting behind Hera, ready to execute her commands.

Juno (ju-no)—see Hera.

Jupiter (ju-pit-er) — the Greek Zeus, king of all the gods and of men, obtained his position by revolution against his father Saturn. He is usually depicted as sitting on an ivory throne, holding in one hand, thunderbolts ready to be hurled, and in the other a sceptre of Cypress. From him, mankind received their blessings and their miseries, and they looked upon him as acquainted with everything, past, present, and future.

Minerva min-er-va)—see Athene.

Neptune —the god of the sea, known to the Greeks as Poseidon. Usually presented as sitting in a chariot, made of a shell and drawn by dolphins. In his hand he holds a trident, his sign of office.

Nereides (nē-re-īd-ēs)—sea nymphs fifty in number, whose duty was to attend on Neptune. They are represented as young maidens, sitting on dolphins and holding Neptunes trident in their hand.

Olympus (o-lim-pus)—a mountain in Thessaly, supposed by the ancients to touch the heavens with its top. From that circumstance, they placed the home of the gods there, and made it the palace of Zeus.

Poseidon (po-si-don)—see Neptune.

Venus (ve-nus)—see Aphrodite.

Zeus (z-us)—see Jupiter.

NOTES

I. PERSEUS AND THE GORGON.

- Page 1. Chest—A box ; generally made of wood.
Adrift—floating at the mercy of wind and waves.
Soothsayer—a prophet, one who can foretell the future.
2. Jealous—suspicious of rivalry.
Held his peace—he did not speak.
In due course—when his turn came round.
Mortal—liable to die.
Steadfastness—firmness of resolution.
Inhabitants of heaven—the gods, believed in by the ancients.
Task—work.
Reflection—image.
Attached to—fastened to
3. With the speed of lightning—extremely quickly.
Underworld—Hades, the place where according to the belief of the ancients, all the dead went, irrespective of whether they were good or bad. It was ruled over by Pluto.
Clammy fog—damp mist.
Pitch—coal tar.
Screwing up his courage—strengthening his courage.
Averted eyes—eyes turned away.
Bred—arose.
-

2. APOLLO AND DAPHNE.

5. Olympus—the home of the gods. See special notes.
Strongly defined traits of human nature—In many ways he strongly resembled human beings.
Faculty—skill.
Wield—use.
Thy torch—see special notes on Cupid.

Page 6. Blunt—not sharp.

Full well—very well.

Experience to the full—must feel very greatly.

Love brings in its train—which accompany love.

Gentle caresses—the idea here is of the wind blowing very gently.

To spy—to see.

As nought—of no value.

Her every interest was centred in the chase—all she cared for, was hunting.

Glades—woods, topes.

Lithe—active.

7. Conquered suppliant—one who has been conquered and imploringly makes a request.

Loathed—hated.

Remorseless pursuer—a pursuer without mercy.

Gaining laurels—to win success by accomplishing some difficult feat.

3. ARION AND THE DOLPHIN.

8. Under the patronage of Periander—with Periander to assist him. In olden days, kings and great nobles used often to have poets at their courts, men whom they encouraged by gifts.

It so befell—it so happened.

He swayed the emotions—he touched people's hearts by his music.

Against the azure of the heavens—against the blue sky.

9. I crave of thee—I ask you.

School of dolphins—a number of dolphins. The dolphin is a type of whale about eight feet in length.

Bard—a poet.

- Page 10. Venerated—thought a lot of.
Tapestry—an embroidered curtain.
Arrayed—dressed.
-

4. TITHONUS.

- Comely—handsome.
Make him her spouse—to marry him.
11. Quaffed—drank.
This boon—this request.
Perpetual—everlasting.
Grassy barrows—graves covered with grass.
-

5. CEYX AND HALCYONE.

12. Rugged—stern
Perforce—necessarily.
Deltý—a god.
Black curtain of night—darkness.
Seething whirlpool—the angry raging sea.
Were of no avail—were useless.
13. Could not long be deferred—could not be postponed.
Pious—holy.
Had weathered the storm—had escaped from.
Secluded—solitary.
Caves of Somnus—the abode of sleep.
Vigil—watch.
14. Dank—moist.
-

6. THE ARGONAUTS.

15. Centaur—a fabulous monster, half man, half horse.
Demi-god—one whose nature is partly divine.
16. Predicament—state of affairs.
17. He made to lay—he got ready to lay.
Divining his thoughts—guessing what his thoughts were.

- Page 18. Crafty—cunning.
 Flashing eye—excited appearance.
 19. Galley—ship.
 Bows—the curving forepart of a ship.
 20. Despondently—in despair.

II.

- Block up the harbour—to build a wall across the
 harbour to prevent vessels coming in or going out.
 21. Brawny—muscular.
 Fountain a stream.
 Bevy—a group.
 Water nymphs—immortal maidens who had charge of
 the streams.
 Skirting the coasts—keeping close to the shores.
 Intrepid—bold.
 Princely demeanour—royal manner.

III.

22. Citadel—fortress.
 Errand—message.
 Exchanging greetings—speaking to the heroes and
 welcoming them.
 Dissembling—hiding.
 Bootless—useless, vain.
 Claimant—one who claims.
 23. Horde—host.
 All this must.....home again—he must do all this
 between dawn and sunset.
 Quailed—sank.
 Serene—calm.
 Shrouded by a veil—hidden by a veil.
 Salve—ointment.
 24. Presumption—over-boldness.
 Dauntless—unafraid.
 Flinched—gave way.

Page 24. Onset—attached.

Blindly—not knowing what they were doing.

25. What was afoot—what was being planned.

7. ORPHEUS AND EURYDICE.

26. Muse—goddess.

Lyre—a small harp.

27. The very universe—the world and nature itself.

He drew strains—he played wonderful tunes.

28. A hideous doubt assailed him—he began to doubt if it were true.

Phantom—ghost.

Frenzy—madness.

29. Nightingale—in one story Orpheus is supposed to have been transformed to that sweetest of singing birds, the nightingale.

8. ARACHNE.

Deft—skilful.

Embroider—to ornament with needlework designs.

Filmy—delicate.

Inspiration—divine influence.

Stung Arachne to the quick—hurt her pride. The quick is the sensitive part of the finger nail.

A slight on her—an insult to her.

30. Blasphemous—against the gods.

Extolled—praised.

Domineer over—to bully.

Pit her skill—test her skill.

31. She will mete out to braggarts—she will give to those who boast.

Tableaux—pictures.

Presumptuous—too bold.

Derision—mockery.

Dissipation—evil living.

9. CLYTIE.

- Page 32. Fragrant—sweet smelling.
 Preen their brilliant plumages—arrange their shining feathers.
 Benignant—kindly.
33. Stringent—strict.
 So that his face was mirrored in the stream—so that his reflection was seen in the water.
 Did she crave—did she ask.
34. Deigning—condescending.

10. THE PLEIADES.

- Ponder—to think over.
35. Constellation—group of stars,
 Dome—the roof.
 Thickly clustered foliage—thick with leaves.
 Clearing—an open space.
 Warbled—sang.
 Sward—grass.
36. Arrested their attention—made them look.
 Lavished—given generously.
 Fawned—cringed.
 Fleet—quick.
 Soar up—rise up in the air.
37. Transformed—changed.

13.—PHILOMELA AND PROCNE.

42. Vindictive—full of revenge.
 Recesses—corners.
 Kindred—relations.
43. Evade—dodge.
 Lapwing—An English bird, sometimes called the peewit, with a peculiar cry.

14. IRIS.

- Page 43. Rainbow -- the brilliantly coloured bow or arch seen when rain is falling opposite the sun.
44. Fleecy -- covered with wool.
-

15. PANDORA'S CHEST.

45. I have occasion -- until I happen to.
-

16. THE SWORD OF DAMOCLES.

48. Notorious -- well-known (in a bad sense) as opposed to "famous".
- Letters -- literature.
- Horde -- a large number.
- Curry favour -- to become liked by some one by means of flattery.
- Lauding -- praising.
- Servile -- submissive and cringing.
- Harping -- to keep on repeating.
49. Adulating -- fawning.
- Craven -- coward.
50. Gloating -- to enjoy.
-

17. THE TALE OF THE WOODEN HORSE.

- Lost his heart to her -- fell in love with her.
51. Besieged -- to surround with armed forces.
- Confined -- shut them in so long.
52. Trophy -- prize.
- Flank -- the side.
- Doomed -- fated.
- To raise the siege -- to give up the siege.
53. In the dead of night -- in the middle of the night when everything was quiet.

18. ULYSSES AND THE CYCLOPS.

- Page 54. Untilled—not cultivated.
Artificers—mechanics.
Habitation—dwelling place.
Betokened—showed.
55. Uncouth—awkward.
Massy—huge.
56. Traffic—trade.
Sacked—laid waste.
Prodigious—huge.
57. Remnant—what was left of.
Manifest—clear.
58. Cannibal—one who eats human flesh.
Auger—a carpenter's tool used for boring holes in wood.
59. Anguish—pain.
60. Rout—mob, crowd.
Lurked—lay hidden.
61. Forward gale—a wind which blew there towards their destination.
-

19. STORIES OF HERCULES.

1. Sire—father.
62. Hot with spite—in her great dislike of Hercules.
Lusty—healthy.
Destiny—fate.
Chariot—a car used in ancient warfare, generally on two wheels.
63. Probing the secrets of nature—learning the secrets of nature.
Inspiration—help.
Surmounting—overcoming.
Skirted—were at its edges.
Laborious—hard.

- Page 63. Pondering—thinking about.
 Accosted—was spoken to by.
64. Strife—quarrelling.
 Prospect—the view.
 Alluring—tempting.
 Specious wiles—showy tricks.
 Rue—repent.
 Sloth—laziness.
 Unflinchingly—without hesitation.
65. Primrose path—the pleasant path of idleness.

2.

- Oppressed and downtrodden—those who are treated badly and cruelly used.
 Implacable—could not be appeased.
 To expiate his fault—as penance for his sin.
 Vassal—a subject of.
 Oracle at Delphi—the oracle of Apollo at Delphi in Greece, the most famous of all the Greek oracles.
 Beauty of countenance—handsome appearance.
 Sullen—malignant.
66. (a) Lair—den.
 Assigned—set aside as.
 Resounded—echoed.
 Clotted—stuck together with blood.
 Chops—jaws.
 Invulnerable—could not be wounded.
 Thicket—bushes close together.
 Strangled—choked.
67. Flayed—removed the skin.
 Guise—appearance.
 (b) Pestilent—troublesome.
68. Could avail him nothing—was of no use.
 Foul—evil; hateful.
 (c) Bordering—close to.
 Eluded—escaped from.

- Page 68 Antlers—horns.
Browsing—feeding on the grass.
69. Consumed him—he was dying from thirst.
Vigil—watch.
Fatigue—weariness.
70. Vindictive—revengeful.
(d) Grimmer—a much harder task.
Ravaging—laying waste.
Fumes—vapour.
71. Agony—great pain.
Intent curiosity—eager curiosity.
Venom—poison.
Snow drifts—heaped up snow.
(e) Set his wits to work—thought his hardest.
Intrepid—fearless.
72. Diverted—changed the course of.
Swirled—rushed.
73. (g) Act of folly—stupid deed.
Desecration—act of changing or removing from a sacred purpose.
74. Source—cause.
Pest—nuisance.
Havoc—destruction.
Realm—kingdom.
Limpid—clear.
Champed—foamed.
Gore—to pierce with its horns.
75. (h) Vicious—savage.
Halter—rope.
Keeping them in check—restraining them.
76. (i) Formidable—dangerous.
Virago—a bold and impudent woman.
77. (j) Straits of Gades—now the Straits of Gibraltar.
Pillars of Hercules—two huge rocks on the African side of the Strait of Gibraltar.
Peculiar—curious.

- Page 78. (k) Sable—black.
79. In quest of-- in search of.
Destiny - fate.
Massive—huge.
80. Remonstrances—rebukes.
81. Margin—edge.
82. Achieve—to perform.
Affrighted--terrified.
83. Surf—waves at the shore.
Webfooted--having skin between the toes, as, for
example, all waterfowl, ducks, etc.
Tinge slightly coloured.
Hospitable—kindly.
84. Relaxed—let go.
Impertinent—rude.
Stubbornly--obstinately.
Clutch—grasp.
85. Leisure—time.
Lustrous—shining.
86. Acorn--the fruit of the oak.
Reverberated—re-echoed.
89. Exploit—deed.
90. Prodigious--huge.
Caper—to jump about.
Floundering - struggling.
Immersed - covered.
92. Twilight—between sunset and dark.
Chafes—rubs.
93. Quoth--said.
94. (l) Chasm—a deep yawning gulf.
Vice like--extremely firm.
Ordeal—task.
-

20. THESEUS AND THE MINOTAUR.

- Page 97. Zealous - eager.
Puny - weak.
98. Started - began to move.
Disquieted - anxious.
99. Sinew - nerve, muscle.
Sluggish - slow to move.
Cavity - a hole.
Coffer - a box.
101. Designs - plans.
Features - the countenance, appearance.
102. Goblet - a large drinking cup without a handle.
Gushed - came out from his heart quickly.
To find utterance - to speak.
Confusion - shame.
103. Infirmities - weaknesses. In this case, old age.
104. Tremulous - shaky.
Tottering - unsteady, due to old age.
Abominable - wicked.
Prospect - expectation, hope.
Precisely - exactly.
Pearls - well-known shiny gems, opaque, found mostly in the oyster.
Emeralds - precious stones, green in colour.
Rubies - precious stones, red in colour.
Sapphires - precious stones white in colour.
Opals - precious stones milky in colour remarkable for their changing colours.
Topazes - precious stones, usually yellow.
105. Ponderous - heavy.
106. Duskiness of some deep cavern - darkness of a deep cave.
Aspect - appearance.
Damsels - young girls.
108. Undulating - shaking with the waves.

Page 109. Master of the vessel - the ship's captain.

- 110. Perplexed - puzzled.
Butt-end - broad end.
Formidable posture - terrifying position.
 - 111. Reverberation - echo.
 - 112. Perpetrated - committed, done.
 - 113. He felt conscious - he thought.
 - 115. Labyrinth - a building consisting of halls connected by intricate passages.
Minotaur - a fabulous monster, half man, half bull.
 - 116. Intricate - puzzling.
 - 119. Straddling - striding, walking with the legs far apart.
-

21. CIRCE THE ENCHANTRESS.

- 120. In the course of - during.
Hurricane - a severe storm.
- 121. Bladder - a thin bag filled with air.
Scudding - dashing along.
Cove - inlet of the sea.
Weather worn - tired by the weather.
Rill - stream.
Clambered - climbed up.
- 122. Edifice - building.
Banquet - a feast.
Victuals - food.
- 123. Communicate - might have to give as information.
Out of the common run - no ordinary bird.
- 124. Succulent - tasty, toothsome.
Spit - an iron prong, on which meat is roasted.
Misadventure - accident.
- 125. Reconcile me - make me content to be.
Dished - served up as a meal.
Sagacity - wisdom.

- Page 126. Savoury - tasty.
Plaintively - sadly.
127. Dolorously - with sorrow.
Mariners - sailors.
Singled out - chose.
128. Freak - curiosity.
Frisking - jumping about.
Melodiously - sweetly.
Texture - web of cloth.
Intertwining - twisting together.
129. Sirens - certain nymphs, found off the coast of Italy who enticed sailors to destruction by means of sweet music.
130. Conceive - imagine.
131. Wrought figures - carved figures in metal.
Quaff - drink.
Prodigiously - a very long time.
132. You have abused - you have not behaved properly, and have taken advantage of.
Gluttons - those who overeat themselves.
134. Anguish - grief.
Predicament - plight, difficult position.
137. Propriety - fitness.
Tapestry - embroidered curtains.
138. Canopied - having coverings.
Gormandizers - gluttons.
Inhale - to breathe in.
139. Potent - powerful.
Effervesced - to bubble and froth up.
Draught - this drink.
Solace - consolation.
141. Corrupt - to defile, to make bad.
Expeditiously - quickly.
-

22. MIDAS.

Page 144. Buttercups and dandelions—wild flowers, found in Europe, of a bright yellow hue, and great favourites with children.

Inhaling their perfume—smelling them.

Obscure—the dark.

145. Burnished circumference—the polished round outside of the cup.

Inclination—wish.

146. Supernatural—not belonging to this world.

Aspect—appearance.

Beneficent—kindly.

Lustre—a shining appearance.

147. Diminutive—very small.

Conception—idea.

Induce—persuade.

148. Fabric—cloth.

Transmuted—changed

Frenzy—excitement.

Fluted—carved into grooves.

149. Flexibility—ability to be bent about.

150. Indefatigably—without getting tired, industriously.

Investigate—to examine.

152. Blighted—rotted away, withered.

153. Quandary—awkward position.

154. Ravenous—hungry.

155. Congealing—to become solid.

Insatiable—something which cannot be satisfied.

156. Dimple—a small natural depression on the face.

23. HERO AND LEANDER.

159. Bards—poets and singers of their own works.

Laid their homage at her feet—paid her every respect.

Crave—desire.

Page 159. Shrine—temple.

Hellespont—the ancient name of the Dardanelles the strait which separates Europe from Asia Minor.

Peer forth—to peep out, *i.e.*, to come into view in the heavens.

Raging channel—the fierce and stormy waves.

When Aurora shyly appeared in the eastern sky—when dawn broke.

Sea horses—white capped waves, so called from their resemblance to the mane of a horse.

160. Flickering—burning unsteadily.

Beacon torch—guiding light.

24. PYRAMUS AND THISBE.

160. Chink—a small crevice or hole.

161. Despite the opposition shown to them—in spite of their parents' refusal to allow them to marry.

Lair—den.

To keep his tryst—to keep his appointment.

162. Mingled in the same urn—their ashes were put in the same funeral vase.

25. BAUCIS AND PHILEMON.

162. Frugal—scanty, economical.

163. Hospitality—friendly welcome and entertainment of guests.

Providence—the foresight of God.

Distaff—spinning wheel.

164. Bountifully—plentifully.

Meandered—winded about.

So beneficently—in such a kind manner.

165. The farther extremity—the far end.

Confused din—a loud uproar and noise.

Eminence—hill.

Page 166. So hospitable an aspect—with such a look of welcome.
That I may make you what amends I can—that I
may repay you as fully as possible for what you have
suffered.

Have bespattered us finely with their mud balls—
have covered us with the mud which they have
thrown.

167. Muzzle—the mouth lips, and nose of an animal.
Yelp—cry out, howl.

168. Trifling enough—little enough.

169. Garb—dress.

170. Visage—face.

Irresistibly—unable to resist.

Comprehend—understand.

Garrulously—in a talkative manner.

172. Decorum—proper behaviour.

In great confusion—much ashamed.

173. Cascade—a waterfall, a flow.

174. Palatable—pleasant to the taste.

175. Clusters—bunches.

Without apparently diminishing his cluster—without
there seeming to be any fewer grapes on his bunch.

178. Perplexed—puzzled.

Too distinctly—too clearly.

180. Most invigorating fluid—most refreshing liquid.

Curmudgeon—a bad tempered person.

Portal—gate, entrance to the dwelling.

26. PROSERPINA AND PLUTO.

182. Glistening—shining.

Seagreen—the colour of sea water.

Gratitude—thankfulness.

183. Snuff up—breathe in.

Exquisite—very fine.

- Page 184. Cavity—hole.
Curvetting—prancing.
Sullen - morose, sulky.
187. Crevices—cracks.
The air became obscured with a grey twilight—the
atmosphere became clouded over, as if dusk were
falling.
189. Illuminated—lit up.
Radiance—brilliancy, splendour.
Lethe--the river of Forgetfulness, in the underworld.
Whoever drank of its waters, or even entered them
forgot about his previous existence.
190. Blighted—spoilt.
193. Melancholy—sad.
Hecate—a witch.
196. With an elegant obeisance—making a court-like bow.
199. Artificial—not natural.
202. Verdant—green.
203. Mutual transport—their common joy.
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